CUSSING, FIGHTING, AND BULLYING: ASPECTS OF PUPIL INTERACTION IN A MIXED, MULTICULTURAL, INNER CITY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

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THESIS ABSTRACT
CUSSING, FIGHTING, AND BULLYING: ASPECTS OF PUPIL INTERACTION IN A MIXED, MULTICULTURAL, INNER CITY COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Bullying has been a source of disquiet, if not moral panic, in recent years. Yet pupil experience outside the classroom has rarely been given the attention it deserves in educational research devoted to the problem. This study examines the social relations between pupils in the lower years of a mixed, multicultural, inner city school. It is based upon long term participant observation as a teacher researcher and aims to develop a sociological appreciation of aggression and bullying during school-day free-time.

Part One explains the origins of the research. Recent studies of 'cussing' (verbal abuse), fighting (a topic which has hitherto received very little attention), and bullying are then examined in detail. The research seeks to identify the links, if any, between hostile social relations in school and broader social inequalities at a societal level. Further, it aims to tease out ways in which micro level divisions of power within the pupils' social world shape, and are used by children within interactions. Close attention is therefore given to the meaning, or meanings, of the term 'power'. Models of relative power which inform research focusing upon pupil experience are also identified.

In Part Two, both the research site, City School, and the research techniques used are described. Cussing, fighting and bullying, forms of aggressive interaction which distress pupils and obstruct the achievement of curricular goals, are then examined closely. Consideration of gender, 'race' and age grading provides a sharper awareness of underlying power divisions and of how these constrain opportunities for the relatively weak.

In Part Three, ways of improving the quality of experience available for pupils during school-day free-time are identified. Whilst the complexity of this task is acknowledged, the study concludes with a renewed sense of optimism about what may be achieved when teachers are more effectively equipped with the skills to understand and, where necessary, make sensitive interventions.

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LIST OF CONTENTS

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background to the present study

The tendency for teachers to adopt defensive postures when confronted with the insights of educational research is widely recognised and is, perhaps, not altogether surprising. Yet the growth of interest in school processes has undermined any grounds for teacher complacency. It is no longer possible to deny the impact of schooling upon pupil attainment as has been abundantly demonstrated. Among many other studies, Hargreaves' Social Relations in a Secondary School (1967) and Lacey's High Town Grammar (1970) were particularly important in drawing attention to some large unforeseen consequences of school organisation. Rutter's Fifteen Thousand Hours (Rutter et al, 1979) demonstrated as never before the key role of effective schools in the production of successful school outcomes; and subsequent studies, including more recently School Matters. The Junior Years (Mortimore et al, 1988) Young Children at School in the Inner City (Tizard et al, 1988) and The School Effect : a study of Multicultural Comprehensives (Smith and Tomlinson, 1989) added new threads to this tapestry.

These varied studies have, in part, been underpinned by a belief that pupils' learning potential is filtered through a range of processes which are subject to teacher control. Hence a consensus has emerged that where school populations are broadly similar, variations in performance (as identified through key outcomes) are related to the differential performance of educational professionals. At present there is, therefore, an abundance of faith in the capacity of vibrant teachers working in effective schools to help pupils to achieve 'successful' school outcomes.

My core interest is in the exploration of pupil interaction during the course of school-day free-time. It is arguable therefore that I am primarily interested in the aspect of pupil experience which

may be least susceptible to adult influence. I developed an interest in this area as a direct consequence of my teaching experience. My early work was in northern comprehensive schools situated on extensive well-equipped campuses with playgrounds and playing fields, and this contrasted with my then current job in a southern inner city school based on a cramped split-site campus. Pupil social interaction outside lessons appeared to be far more hostile and aggressive in this school and I therefore became interested in learning more about pupil experience in school playgrounds.

I initially prepared a small scale M.A. study which focused upon the playgrounds of the school in question, which I shall call City School.[1] Even though this dissertation was very limited in scale (it was prepared as one unit of a taught, exam-based M.A. degree) it raised many interesting points. For example, whilst work upon the thesis did not suggest the need to doubt the evidence in Fifteen Thousand Hours, which shows that schools can triumph over the limitations of school sites, it gradually became clear that it may be dangerous to assume that this observation inevitably holds true for all schools at all points in time (Rutter et al, 1979, pages 99-102).

This was not, however, the key legacy of the M.A. study. The main one was that it became clear that surprisingly little is known about the experiences of younger secondary pupils during school-day free-time in mixed, multicultural, inner city schools. Work on the M.A. study also led to a belief that long term ethnographic research by a teacher could help in a small way towards the development of understanding in this area. The key aim of the present study is therefore to work towards this goal. It focuses upon the experiences of 11-14 year old pupils during the free-time parts of the school-day - breaks, lunchtimes and immediately before or after school.

Fieldwork for the present study involved an extended period of participant observation at City School, the same school as had been the focus of the M.A. study. In total I worked at City School over a nine year period, and this included time as both a Head of Department and Head of Year. Even though the data for the present study was largely gathered during my final four years there, the research is able to benefit from a degree of involvement in the life of a school which is rarely available to outside researchers. Long term immersion in the life of the school provided an opportunity to begin to tease away at some very subtle, varied and complex processes which may affect the character of pupil social relations in a given context, and also gave me an opportunity to begin to understand most, if not all, of the meanings of a given interaction.

The core of the research examines some of the less wholesome features of pupil social relations. This inevitably means that the study presents a somewhat negative, even pessimistic, portrayal of the pupil social world. It is important at the outset therefore to note that City School was thought to be a very good inner city school. It enjoyed a deservedly high reputation, which was reflected in its popularity with parents and its ability to remain oversubscribed in an area where many neighbouring schools were faced with falling rolls. Moreover the interaction of children could be, and generally was, characterised by wit, friendliness, generosity, spontaneity and thoughtfulness - all qualities which unfortunately tend to slide into the background when areas of pupil interaction which give cause for concern are highlighted.

Throughout the study we shall see that I am centrally interested in aggressive forms of pupil interaction which are a source of concern for both teachers and parents. The study includes discrete chapters which focus upon cussing (verbal abuse), fighting and bullying.

However, the study also examines the broader relationship between boys and girls, children from different ethnic groups, and the relationship between children from different school years or age grades. It is in fact largely through examination of these three broader sets of relationships that a sense of how children may understand, and use, micro specific divisions of power within their interaction begins to emerge.

Organisation of the thesis

The study is arranged in twelve chapters. Following this chapter, Part One has two chapters which review the existing literature. There are three sections in Chapter 2 and these focus upon the phenomenon of cussing, bullying and fighting. There has been a rapid development of interest in bullying in recent years and the chapter examines the associated research: it also explores some of the varied ways in which the phenomenon of bullying has been conceptualised. It shows that while close attention has been given to research which focuses upon an important facet of bullying - cussing or verbal abuse - the phenomenon of fighting has too often been neglected in educational research. The chapter notes, nonetheless, a number of important research insights about this intense form of pupil aggression.

Chapter 3 takes the study a stage further by moving on to the theme of power. I note that the concept of power is of central importance in the present study. Within the first part of the chapter, an attempt is made to identify some of the main ways in which power has been conceptualised and to locate explicit and implicit features of specific conceptualisations. This includes reference both to Weber's influential definitions of power and to Foucalt's radically different way of perceiving the dynamic print of power in social institutions and discourses. The second part of the chapter teases out the models of the relative power of social groups which inform a

variety of educational studies. Further, it shows that research may be constructed around such models even where this is not explicitly acknowledged.

Part Two consists of seven chapters and forms the core of the study. Chapter 4 focuses upon research methodology and describes City School, while chapters 5-10 are devoted to the presentation and exploration of data. Chapter 4 gives attention to some of the criticisms which have been made of ethnographic research using data gathered as a participant observer, but reasserts the reasons for believing that ethnographic research by teacher researchers makes a valuable contribution to broader educational discourse. Following this preliminary discussion, the chapter then describes City School and notes relevant demographic details relating to the school population. Finally the research techniques used in the course of the study are detailed and some of the ethical priorities of the study are identified.

All six chapters (Chapters 5-10) which present and comment upon data are organised in the same way. A brief introduction sets the scene and explains the purpose of each individual chapter which is then divided into two main sections. In the first section the data is presented, and in the second a commentary upon the data is provided.

Part Three consists of two chapters and draws the overall study to a close. In Chapter 11 the main conclusions of the study are identified. Chapter 12 seeks to identify some of the main implications of the research. Through reference to the Elton Report, consideration of policy is situated within the context of current debates about how schools may foster forms of good practice which contribute to the creation of a positive learning environment for pupils. This chapter considers the policy implications of primary relevance for the subject school. At the same time, however, a more

ambitious attempt is made to identify broader implications, including some about the position of younger teachers beginning their careers in inner urban schools. The study ends with a renewed sense of optimism about what may be achievable when schools strive to identify and adopt forms of good practice.

Footnotes

1. In the M.A. study I called this institution The Jennifer Jones High School. In the present study I use the name City School instead. This name is preferred both because it is a reminder that the research is about an inner urban school and because it is more concise.

CHAPTER 2

FORMS OF AGGRESSION - DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN CUSSING, FIGHTING AND BULLYING

In Chapter 1 I explained that my aim in the present study is to examine the broad phenomenon of inter-pupil aggression during the course of school-day free-time. Further, I established that I am interested both in reciprocated aggression as well as in bullying. A central aim of the present chapter is to examine educational research about, and to distinguish between, two sub-types of pupil aggression which are of focal interest - verbal abuse (cussing) and fighting. Both these problems have been a cause of growing concern, although verbal abuse has, to date, received considerably more attention than fighting in research. Cussing and fighting can, and do, occur apart from situations in which bullying is involved. However, it will become clear that cussing and fighting may also happen within the context of more general bullying. The lack of research about fighting which is based upon participant observation within the field of more general research about bullying is noted as an especial cause for concern. In the final section of the chapter, the rapidly developing body of research about bullying is explored and important definitions of the term bullying are examined. I open the chapter by simply noting that research within three academic traditions - Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology - is relevant in developing an understanding of pupil aggression.

The relevance of sociological, psychological and anthropological research

In the study of pupil aggression much can be learnt from research in three disciplines - Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology. Whilst I

do not intend to labour this rather obvious point, a number of examples will help to illustrate the relevance of research in these areas. A strong sense of the value of taking into account time-specific influences when developing an understanding of pupil social relations emerges in some social psychological research. For instance, in Black and White in School (1982), an American study which focused upon the relationship between black and white pupils at a new magnet school heralded as a model of integration, Scholfield examined some of the routine tensions between black and white pupils both in and outside lessons. She noted, however, that the showing of the documentary drama Roots on television generated a period of greater tension between black and white children in the school.

Through psychological research, the value of systematic monitoring of forms of aggression also becomes especially apparent. For example, in 'Levels of Aggression in a Traditional and a Pluralistic School' (1976) Johnstone and Krovetz explored the proposition that playground aggression reflects pupil frustration linked to learning environments. With the aid of a detailed monitoring framework, they were able to record the actual frequency of specific forms of aggression (hitting and striking, snatching and pursuing etc) and this provided a meaningful platform for comparison between educational institutions.

It is all too easy for teacher researcher studies which are primarily influenced by Sociology to display a predisposition to gravitate towards aggressive forms of interaction which highlight inequality and exploitation. The current research is no exception. The influential research of the Opies displays an anthropological rather than a sociological heritage. A world characterised by rhymes, riddles and repartee, rather than inequality is depicted in The Lore

and Language of Schoolchildren (1977), Childrens Games in Street and Playground (1969) and The Singing Game (1985). I therefore refer to the work of the Opies at several points in this chapter. Because of its capacity to tap into and draw out the boisterous, innocent and predominantly fair world of childhood, this approach presents a challenge to sociological research which targets aspects of pupil interaction which give cause for concern.

Notwithstanding the relevance of both psychological and anthropological research, sociological research has exercised the primary influence upon the present study. One example will serve to make this point. Measor and Woods' study, Changing Schools : Pupil Perspectives on Transfer to A Comprehensive School (1984) focused upon the fears and anxieties of pupils in their last term at middle school and continued to follow the same children after transfer to a nearby comprehensive school. In terms of the narrow interests of the present study Changing Schools is helpful because of its sensitivity to the potential impact of the organisational process of placing pupils in school years or age grades and its awareness that the relationship between children from different school years or age grades may not always be smooth. The formation of successful relationships with older children can therefore be one of the important transitional difficulties of children entering secondary school.

It will be seen below that, as the present study explores pupil aggression at City School, an attempt is made to tease out the nature of the relationship between children from different school years or age grades. Further, an attempt is made to situate this alongside an appreciation of the significance of gender and ethnic antagonisms in the pupil social world.

Cussing

Interest in name calling - the process of belittling the physical

qualities, material possessions and relatives of classmates, and other pupils - has blossomed in recent years. Furthermore the phenomenon of verbal abuse has tended to feature prominently when local authorities have set out to create physical policies to combat racism and sexism in schools. The I.L.E.A. series on Race, Sex, Class, for example, recognised that the creation of a climate in which equality of opportunity could flourish was contingent upon the elimination of verbal abuse, and not merely physical forms of harassment.[1]

The Swann Report : Education for All (1985) regarded racist name calling as an especially virulent form of verbal abuse and stated:

> We believe the essential difference between racist name calling and other forms of name calling is that whereas the latter may be related only to the individual characteristics of a child, the former is a reference not only to the child but also by extension to their family and indeed more broadly their community as a whole.
>
> (The Swann Report 1985, p. 35)

Whilst few would quibble with the Swann Report's assessment of racist name calling, it is readily apparent that other forms of verbal abuse may also be highly distressing for recipients and extend beyond 'individual characteristics'. Goffman's study Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity has drawn attention to some of the difficulties experienced by these considered to be 'different' when in interaction with the 'normal', and it is usually through words that the 'different' are made aware of their humble identity (Goffman, 1963).

How does Iona and Peter Opie's classic study of children's

language, The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren (1977), fit into this picture? Within a large and amazingly wide ranging text which covers such varied topics as 'pranks', 'unpopular children', 'half belief', and 'riddles', the Opies draw attention to the multifarious ways in which children verbally abuse each other, albeit playfully, using an extraordinary array of nicknames which draw upon aspects of physical appearance. Section headings in the chapter focusing upon nicknames actually include: 'Skinnies', 'Lankies', 'Little Uns', 'Red Heads', and the 'Funny Faced' (1977, Chapter 9). It is intriguing that the Opies also note the way in which unpopular children - including 'spoil sports', 'clever dicks', 'nosey parkers', cowards and bullies - may, somewhat less playfully, be singled out for abuse (Chapter 10). Nevertheless, the tone of their text is celebratory: emphasis is placed upon the capacity of the children for quick wit and a consideration of problems stemming from verbal 'play' is noticeably absent.

The robust child, equipped with a strong sense of 'fun', would, perhaps, experience few problems in the world as depicted by the Opies. Yet, given the encyclopaedic character of their text, it is a little surprising that important patterns of playful, or not so playful, abuse are omitted from their work. It is misleading to judge their work simply from the standpoint of the 1990s - the fact that the Opies fail to offer a consideration of racialist and sexist abuse is important, but perhaps simply reflects the fact that their way of viewing the world is rooted in terms of the dominant conceptualisations of the 1950s and not those of a later era. Nevertheless, their work would also appear to be open to a charge of insensitivity to certain readily apparent and highly significant forms of abuse. For example, attention is not drawn towards comments directed at the poor. It is interesting moreover that their work does

not offer any real insight into the tendency for children to comment about the mothers of their friends and associates - a phenomenon which will be considered in Chapter 5 of the present study.

In the examination of emerging patterns of language use in multicultural communities which include significant Afro Caribbean populations, three studies are of particular significance: Edward's Language in a Black Community (1986); Sutcliffe's British Black English (1982) and Hewitt's White Talk Black Talk (1986). Edward's study demonstrates how use of Patois can serve as a boundary marker and displays particularly effectively the way in which use of Patois may signal both a perception and rejection of the low status assigned to black people in a racist, white dominated, society (1986,p.132).

Attention is drawn by Sutcliffe to the significance of dynamic verbal skills within Afro American and Afro Caribbean cultures and he points out that the forms of skills evident in Black American communities - rapping, verbal duelling, rifting, fancy talk, signifying, loud-talking, marking - are also evident in the British Black Community.

In White Talk Black Talk (1986) Hewitt also displays an awareness of the significance of verbal skills in Afro Caribbean culture and the special importance black youngsters attach to the development and display of this facility. This study is, in addition, sharply aware of the tendency for change in black linguistic usage and points out that the language employed by black youth in the late 1970s was quite different from that of earlier generations of rude boys. A core concern is to raise questions about language usage in interchanges which involve both black and white youths. Hewitt demonstrates, for example, that amongst black and white friends playful racial abuse may occur and argues that this has to be understood against the backcloth of racism in society. In essence such play transcends racism by

acknowledging its existence and thereby undermining its force. Yet, conscious of the overwhelmingly powerful historical associations of many remarks directed at black youngsters, he is careful to warn of the potential for mutual misunderstanding in this process (1986 p.236).

Not surprisingly, since his primary task is descriptive and his focal concern is language, Sutcliffe (1982) does not provide any real picture of what happens if linguistic games break down. What happens when someone is upset by verbal play? What happens too if a youngster attempts to put into effect a culturally specific linguistic practice? What happens if a black youngster attempts to set in motion a verbal duel and a white youngster simply believes that they are being cussed? For the teacher researcher with a focal interest in the quality of pupil interaction rather than in linguistics, it is ,however, questions of this type which are of primary concern. Arguably Hewitt's (1986) study itself provides an important clue about how to begin to look for answers to these questions, for he draws attention to the fact that white youngsters may recognise that use of black linguistic practices is potentially problematic (1986, p. 152). This point is important, for it shows that young people from different ethnic groups may be aware that quarrels or disputes can develop in contexts where there is simply mutual misunderstanding and no intention to bully.

Nonetheless where research has a primary interest in logging linguistic practices, it is all too easy to lose sight of one simple fact: verbal abuse can be highly distressing for victims. For example, the Opies sustain a consistently light tone when they focus upon nicknames and epithets and this undermines the reader's capacity to appreciate that teasing can be extremely upsetting for recipients. In addition, they do not show how children respond when they are the targets of remarks which they intensely dislike.

From research which begins with rather different pre-occupations, and much closer interest in the experience of victims, rather different insights about verbal abuse emerge. Thus, for example, in Young Children at School in the Inner City, Tizard et al explore factors associated with the educational progress of infants in 33 London schools. 67% of the pupils interviewed admitted being teased and 96% claimed that other children faced teasing. It is furthermore stressed that this teasing is intensely disliked by victims (Tizard et al 1988,pages 153-4). Research which focuses directly upon bullying has in recent years stressed that name calling is sometimes a key aspect of bullying. For example, in 'Bullying in the Infant School' Chazan (1989) cites a series of cases provided by teachers in South Wales and one case study (that of a seven year old with a severely burnt arm) provides a particularly strong impression of the distressing effect of name calling upon children perceived by their friends to possess stigmata. Besag's major review of research about bullying, Bullies and Victims in Schools (1989), makes the important point that there is often a close interlinking between name calling, scape-goating, and exclusion. The child who is cussed is also, unhappily, often the child who is excluded altogether from conversation with his or her peers.

Two important studies, Cohn's, 'Sambo - a study in racist name calling' (1988) and Kelly's 'Pupils, Racial Groups and Behaviour in School' (1988) both focus upon racist name calling. Ironically, although Cohn's primary focus is upon racist name calling, her study generates a number of observations of even more general interest. She shows that whilst racist verbal abuse is the most common form of abuse in the schools which she studied, there are other unpleasant forms of abuse, including abuse about gender, sexuality and family or family

connections, which wound every bit as much. Moreover, it becomes depressingly clear that the amount of racist name calling increases as pupils age and she notes that the racist name calling appears to be gendered: the amount is greater amongst boys than girls (p. 4). Two further important gender-related differences also emerge. Firstly, boys appear to react more aggressively than girls when they are the victims of abuse. Secondly, girls are obviously more likely than boys to be the victims of sexist abuse.

Kelly's (1988) Manchester study, commissioned in the aftermath of the murder of a pupil at Burnage High School, highlights both the sheer scale of the racist name calling problem and notes that the impact varies between ethnic groups. Her research also provides an insight which lends support to one of Cohn's most pessimistic findings; it indicates that the sheer volume of racist name calling appears to rise as pupils age (Kelly 1988, p.17). A great strength of Kelly's study is that it does not crudely assume that all name calling is equally offensive. She notes that it is apparently name calling from other pupils in general, rather than name calling by friends, that is especially distressing. Most pupils can cope with a little friendly teasing from friends.

Both Kelly's and Cohn's studies are presented in one book, Racism in Schools - New Research Evidence (1988), and interestingly both studies implicitly take it for granted that white ('English') pupils form the most powerful groups within the social world of the schools they study. Yet in one of the three primary schools considered in Cohn's study, white 'English' pupils constituted roughly 30% of the school population, while in one of the three secondary schools considered by Kelly, white 'English' pupils constituted 50% of the school population (pages 33 and 9). Whilst both studies very helpfully identify the phenomenon of racist verbal abuse, they could

have spelt out more clearly the relationship between the specific ethnic composition of each subject school and the actual (and potentially distinctive?) expression of verbal abuse in each institution.

That talk, whether through the medium of abuse or in various other guises, may constitute an important site for the expression of power relations is, of course, widely recognised. Thus, Wood's, 'Groping Towards Sexism : Boys' Sex Talk' (1984), traces the linkages between derogatory sex talk and exploitative 'bundles' in the on-site unit of one secondary school and also displays a sharp awareness of the relationship between this phenomenon and the underlying, structural patterns of male domination in British society. It might be suspected therefore that wherever research draws upon the general insight of Austinian[2] linguistic philosophy by recognising that talk invariably involves a great deal above and beyond the mere exchange of surface meaning (and perhaps above all where research is structurally alert to the possibility that specific modes of communication may be underpinned by, and express, divisions of power) significant opportunities arise to gain insight about the 'real' nature of pupil interaction in a specific micro context.

Fighting

Many teachers complain about teacher training courses from time to time and they often claim that courses rarely offer the opportunity to acquire the types of practical skills actually needed when in work. Whatever the merits of this argument, it is striking that few, if any, college-based courses provide students with much needed practical advice - advice about how to break up serious playground fights, for example. Whilst this might make good sense in terms of professional recruitment, it is not at all clear that this omission serves the interests of young teachers about to begin their careers in inner city

schools.

The very unreality of some portrayals of serious fighting in the available literature provides one important clue about why this phenomenon is seldom discussed during teacher training. If students were to work only with The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren, for example, in which the Opies claim that when a fight is taking place spectators gather and make remarks such as 'bash him one', 'biff him on the bonko', and 'dong him on the dome' they would be ill-prepared (1977, p. 216). Anyone with recent inner city secondary school experience may well be left rather bemused by the tone of this portrayal! Even though one or two of the comments which they list (for example, 'mash him', and 'get in and kill him') (1977,p. 216), smack less of the era of Dan Dare, this still does not alter the underlying gentility, and faintly archaic quality, of their portrayal.

If we focus upon the experience of those caught up in serious fights rather than upon the reaction of spectators, a second weakness of the Opies' presentation also becomes apparent. They fail to convey the fact that fighting can be a very disturbing experience indeed for those who become involved, as Tizard et al's recent study, Young Children at School in the Inner City (1988) shows. Only 14% of the children interviewed during this study (20% of the boys and 7% of the girls) pointed to a smiling face when asked how they felt about getting into fights. Interestingly, however, 67% of the children (79% of the boys and 56% of the girls) actually admitted to getting into fights (Tizard,1988,p. 159).

This data is alarming in two ways. Firstly, it appears to show that even as early as the infant years a substantial minority of boys (20% of the boys interviewed) actually enjoyed fighting. This is particularly disturbing since it is a figure which is unlikely to contract as boys 'mature' and become increasingly pre-occupied with

toughness. Equally, the fact that 47% of the children got involved in fights even though they disliked fighting is alarming. These figures point to a great deal of individual distress and provide an important reminder that when adults bring large numbers of children together for schooling they can make few guarantees about the well being of specific individual pupils.

Evidence from studies about much older young people, evidence, that is, both from studies which focus upon youth subcultures outside school and from research which concentrates upon pupils in their later secondary years, leaves few doubts that fighting is an activity which brings pleasure and excitement to many adolescent males. Several important studies note that fighting is a major 'leisure activity' for many working class males during the adolescent years. Fighting occupies a position of prominence in A Glasgow Gang Observed, (Patrick 1973) Knuckle Sandwich : growing up in the working class city, (Cohen and Robins,1978) The Paint House : Words from an East End Gang (Daniel and McGuire, 1972) and The Rules of Disorder, (Marsh, Rosser, Harre, 1978). Regardless of whether the focus is upon relatively tight gangs as in A Glasgow Gang Observed (1973), or upon looser groupings formed for violence at football grounds, as in The Rules of Disorder, (1978) it is clear that aggression and violence can provide almost unrivalled opportunities for the acquisition of high status amongst adolescent boys.

In the educational context a helpful way to understand fighting may be to focus upon characteristics of schooling rather than simply upon the status of individuals. The simple fact that fights provide both participants and spectators with an opportunity to escape from boring routines should not be overlooked. Research which focuses more directly upon the process of schooling would certainly appear to lend support to this observation. In Learning to Labour, for example,

Willis comments about 'the lads', 'positive joy in fighting' (1978, p. 34). This pre-occupation is seen as an important element in a cultural style which expresses open hostility to the formal learning process and actively seeks out opportunities to 'have a laff'. At the very least fights provide a temporary relief from boredom.

Other studies which primarily focus upon older secondary pupils, including Corrigan's Sunderland study Schooling the Smash Street Kids (1979), also lend strong support to this portrayal. For those concerned to reduce fighting this would point to a need for far more research about the early secondary years since it is possibly in the early secondary years that the proportion of pupils who actually enjoy fighting grows dramatically.

A feature of the literature about youth subcultures (common both to research which primarily concentrates upon school and research with a broader perspective) is that emphasis is placed upon fighting as a group activity which bears a closer relationship to loafing around. Hence it gives few insights into one major, if not predominant, form of fighting in secondary schools: serious or 'real' fights involving two individual pupils. Again this points to the need for much more school-based research, since it is dangerous to assume that there is a simple relationship between group and individual aggression. The adolescent who enjoys taking part in an act of collective violence as part of a gang outside or inside school might well experience very different emotions when engaged in a highly individual encounter with a fellow pupil in front of a large crowd of excited peers.

When reading studies like Learning to Labour, (Willis, 1978) Schooling the Smash Street Kids (Corrigan, 1979) and Social Relations in a Secondary School, (Hargreaves, 1967) the teacher researcher is also inevitably tempted to ask: how often, if ever, were the authors

of these books present when the students with whom they were most closely involved were actually involved in serious fighting? Despite their employment of observational techniques alongside interview techniques, these studies rely heavily upon the 'bravado' observations of the researcher's confidants. A much firmer platform for discussing fighting - albeit gang fighting - is evident in Patrick's A Glasgow Gang Observed (1973) since as a consequence of his adoption of a participant observer role, Patrick was actually present on a number of occasions when Tim and his associates became embroiled in fights. As a result, Patrick is able to convey the fighting phenomenon with particular immediacy whilst at the same time displaying the capacity to distinguish between actual events and the boys' wilder claims about their encounters with other gangs.

Factors which relate to methodology are considered more fully in Chapter 4. However, it is useful to note here that the teacher researcher role, like Patrick's 'full participant' role, would seem to offer a helpful platform from which to make reasonable judgements about the status of particular responses. It offers, in other words, a perspective from which 'bravado' claims can be identified. Such insider involvement is therefore particularly useful when fights are considered because vanity may create distortions whenever boys (or girls?) recall their moments of 'triumph' in individual or gang fights.

In Kelly's (1988) Manchester study, questionnaires were completed by 902 secondary pupils from three schools. The study generated a number of interesting findings: 59% of pupils had picked fights with them. More boys than girls acknowledged that they faced this problem (64% of boys compared to 43% of girls). Nonetheless the survey demonstrated that a

large number of girls suffered this experience. Undoubtedly the most disturbing feature of the survey was the discovery that in all three schools, pupils were aware that some fights had racial undertones and 49% of the fourth year pupils in the three schools claimed that they had witnessed racially motivated fights.

Two other points should be noted. Firstly, as Kelly readily acknowledged, it is not clear how the data of her exploratory study should be interpreted. For example, we cannot be certain how many pupils utilised the term 'fighting' as a description of play fighting (her term 'toy' fighting) and how many confined application of this term to 'real' fighting. Secondly, although her research strongly suggested a serious fighting problem in the three schools, she was not in a position to convey the disruptive effect of this fighting upon school life. This was because she was not a participant observer in the three schools. However, (as any inner city Head of Year knows) fights vary greatly in their intensity and in their disruptive effect upon school life.

Helpful thoughts about how to define and categorise fighting are in fact offered in a much earlier study, which grants a position of primacy to observational rather than questionnaire techniques. St. John Neil's important article 'Aggressive and non-aggressive fighting in twelve and thirteen year old pre-adolescent boys' (1976). A primary objective of this study was to explore whether it was possible to make a firm distinction between rough play and real aggression when focusing upon boys in this age bracket; and also to explore the difference between play fighting ('low intensity fighting') and more serious 'play fighting' ('medium intensity fighting'). According to St. John Neil, in 'low intensity fighting', neither party tries to hurt their opponent: instead the phenomenon is a form of mutual play. However, in 'medium intensity fighting' there is an intention by one

party to inflict pain or real distress upon their opponent or victim. The key finding of St. John Neil's study was that it was fighting of this second and more serious type which was particularly characteristic of boys in early adolescence. Moreover, he noted that it was, in general, much more difficult to distinguish between 'rough and tumble' play (that is 'low intensity fighting') and fighting with a real element of aggression when focusing upon early adolescents, because all their encounters were invariably far rougher than those of younger children.

The phenomenon which St. John Neil calls 'medium intensity fighting' is similar to a phenomenon which is called 'hassling' in Scholfield's Black and White in School Trust, Tension or Tolerance (1982). At Scholfield's Wexler School a pattern of rather threatening horse play, which involved deliberately annoying or provoking, was much in evidence and commonly it was 'softer' white pupils who suffered this distressing experience at the hands of 'rougher' black pupils. Having identified this phenomenon, however, Scholfield makes the important point that many black pupils disliked hassling or intimidation and were not involved in these activities.

Interestingly neither St. John Neil's study nor Scholfield's research sets out to explain these phenomenon by reference to wider power structures within the pupil social world and the theoretical commitments of both researchers would seem to operate against this possibility. Scholfield's study draws primarily upon mainstream social psychological traditions, whilst St. John Neil's study can perhaps best be described as being within the tradition of ethologically influenced psychology. Nevertheless, the possibility that the phenomenon of hassling or medium intensity fighting can be made comprehensible through reference to such power structure would

appear to be at least worthy of consideration. It is intriguing that St. John Neil utilises the language of domination (albeit 'individual domination') in coming to terms with an important aspect of medium intensity fighting. He notes how a switching process commonly occurs in fighting of this type; when a pupil offers resistance the aggressor can raise the aggression level of the encounter, whereas when the weaker participant very readily submits then the more aggressive (and dominant) participant reduces the overall level of aggression employed.

One further point, and a point which greatly assists in relation to the thorny issue of how to define the phenomenon of fighting, can be made through reference to 'Aggressive and Non-aggressive fighting in twelve and thirteen year old pre-adolescent boys'. St. John Neil notes that high intensity fighting (Kelly's 'real' fighting?) was a rare occurence amongst boys at the suburban school he observed. Nevertheless, he identifies certain features which characterise this form of fighting: participants do not try to evade these exchanges, other pupils form crowds to watch, and members of staff intervene whenever they become aware of a fight of this type. The data presented in Chapter 6 focuses primarily upon this most serious, and particularly under-researched, form of fighting.

The overwhelming lack of evidence about 'high intensity fighting' is a cause for concern because it is likely that it is fights of this most serious type which cause greatest distress to pupils. Yet it is not possible to answer a whole series of fundamental questions about it. For example, it is still not possible to quote research which can offer firm guidance about whether high intensity fighting is a problem which is becoming more common in many schools nowadays, although it can be said with certainty that many teachers have formed this impression. Equally, very little is known about fighting amongst girls

and it is not clear whether the general concern in schools to make girls more assertive has led to more high intensity fights involving boys and girls.

However, it is clear that some observations can be made with greater confidence. Kelly's 'Pupils, Racial Groups and Behaviour in Schools' (1988) and Tizard et al's Young Children at School in the Inner City (1988) provide evidence which appears to indicate that fighting of whatever level of intensity is a more serious problem amongst boys than girls; and Scholfield's Black and White in School (1982) demonstrates that this phenomenon is not confined to the United Kingdom. It would also appear possible to be reasonably confident about the tendency for a 'dominance hierarchy' (a power/status structure based upon fighting prowess) to emerge amongst boys in many schools. Thus, Hargreaves in Social Relations in a Secondary School (1967) explains that Clint, the leading figure amongst boys firmly adhering to an 'anti school' stance is also the 'cock' of Lumley School (cock being the pupil term for the boy with the greatest fighting prowess) and Scholfield shows that boys at Wexler School attach great significance to toughness and athleticism and devote a great deal of their conversational time to speculation about the position of particular boys within a dominance hierarchy (1982, p. 103).

Yet even when observations like these can be made with confidence, there is still an urgent need for more research which focuses upon multicultural urban secondary schools. It is clearly dangerous for educationalists to assume that settled and harmonious patterns of inter-personal and inter-group relations will emerge without appropriate curriculum-led interventions in city schools with diverse and rapidly changing populations. Attention to the phenomenon of fighting is also important for another reason. Aggression of this

sort, which does not necessarily involve bullying, is likely to have a highly disruptive effect upon school-life. We therefore need informed guidance.

Bullying

Until recently there has been a surprising lack of research interest in the problem of bullying in British schools. The leading figures in research has been the Norwegian psychologist Olweus, many of whose key ideas can be found in his influential study, Aggression in the Schools : Bullies and Whipping Boys (1978). However, in recent years dramatic portrayals of bullying in the media, including coverage of the death of a pupil at Burnage High School and reports of suicides by victimised children have been closely related to the re-awakening of public consciousness about this problem.

A concomitant feature of this moral panic has been the emergence of a new generation of books which both research into, and offer suggestions about, policies to tackle bullying. Important recent works include two research collections produced by The Professional Development Foundation, Bullying in Schools (Tattum and Lane,1989) and Bullying : an International Perspective (Roland and Munthe, 1989); Besag's, Bullies and Victims in School (1989) and Bullying, The Child's View. An analysis of telephone calls to Childline (Fontaine 1991).

Bullying displays one of the classic traits of areas which become the focus of moral panic. Just as in the case of child abuse, it is by no means clear how widespread the problem actually is. Further, there is an inevitable danger that the current climate of panic leads, at times, to exaggerated claims about its scale. Bullying in Schools rests very firmly upon the conviction that the problem is huge and claims that at any point in time up to 10% of the school population may be the victim of bullying (Tattum and Lane,1989,p. 10).

Other recent studies have also confirmed that bullying is a major problem in British schools. A large scale study of bullying in Sheffield schools (D.E.S. Sheffield Bullying Project) has been underway since 1990. Anonymous questionnaires have been completed by pupils in 24 schools for this survey. In the seven participating secondary schools 10% of pupils claimed to be bullied 'sometimes' and 4% claimed to be bullied at least once a week. An even greater proportion of Junior and middle school pupils, (27%) claimed that they were bullied sometimes or more frequently (Whitney and Smith, 1993, p.4).

However, the elasticity of pupils' responses to questions about bullying is well illustrated in Keise's Sugar and Spice. Bullying in Single Sex Schools (1992). In this study a questionnaire was completed by pupils at a boys' school at the end of a year in which Keise (the local advisory teacher for equal opportunities) had been involved in a harassment project within the school. It would seem that this project had greatly raised consciousness about bullying for two thirds of respondents claimed that they had been bullied or had bullied. It is arguable that this illustrates the need for more independent teacher-research studies which can place greater reliance upon participant observation. Such research can clearly complement studies which make extensive use of questionnaires.

As already indicated, the present study aims to develop a sociological perspective on the wider phenomenon of pupil aggression or unpleasantness. Further, it aims to tease out the social inequalities which turn many instances of individual aggression or unpleasantness into 'bullying'. A useful starting point in pursuit of this goal is the definition provided by Besag in Bullies and Victims in Schools 1989, p.4). She suggests:

> ...bullying is a behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack - physical, psychological, social or verbal, by those in a position of power, which is formally or situationally defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification.

This definition is helpful because it begins to direct attention towards identification of the relative power of a victim or aggressor. At the same time the variety of forms which bullying may take (physical, psychological, verbal or social) is noted. However, the definition's emphasis upon repetition (a common feature of many attempts to define 'bullying') is less satisfactory. Does this mean that a child who directs aggression in a somewhat random way at a wide variety of children is less of a bully than a child who focuses upon one victim?

Through reference to Scandinavian research, Besag notes that a great deal of the early research which was overtly about bullying simply examined one facet of bullying - the problem of 'mobbing'. This term in essence refers to incidents in which an individual is turned upon or set upon by a group. Besag's own definition of bullying with its emphasis upon repetition, represents in part therefore an attempt to encapsulate a wider range of forms of pupil unpleasantness than the term 'mobbing' implies.

I have already acknowledged the importance of the work of Olweus. His initial concern in Aggression in the Schools (1978) is to explain his caution about use of the term mobbing. He notes that because the term 'mobbing' is closely associated with the English term 'mob', it leads to an over emphasis upon the role of 'temporary and situationally determined circumstances' (1978, p. 5). Whilst not denying the occurence of incidents in which mobs suddenly erupt into

violence, Olweus seeks instead to understand the victimisation of specific boys for much longer periods of time. Olweus rejects the view that a complete explanation of why certain boys become victims can be found through a focus upon the way in which these unfortunate individuals deviate from the group. This possibility is rejected because Olweus is sharply aware that every pupil is different in some respect. Hence for Olweus a much more satisfactory explanation of bullying can be found through a focus upon personality factors and Olweus claims that bullies are:

> characterised by an aggressive personality pattern, with a tendency to react aggressively in many different situations, with fairly weak controls or inhibitions against aggressive tendencies and with a positive attitude to violence.
>
> (1978, p. 136)

At the same time Olweus highlights polar tendencies in the personalities of whipping boys and bullies. Bullies tend to be confident, tough and have a positive attitude towards themselves, while whipping boys are, in general, anxious and insecure and have very low self esteem (p. 137). Furthermore, whilst bullies are generally popular with their peers, whipping boys tend to be unpopular (p. 135, p. 137). Olweus' study also made the important if not surprising discovery that bullies were physically stronger and were more aggressive than boys in general, whilst whipping boys were less aggressive and physically weaker than their peers (p. 136, p. 137).

To what extent does Olweus believe that whipping boys create their own problems? When this point is examined, he presents an intriguing argument, claiming that whilst all whipping boys tend to be unpopular and have a poor self image, they vary in the extent to which

they contribute to their difficulties with other pupils. There are, he claims, two types of victims. Passive victims are unlucky for they do nothing untoward to provoke other children. In contrast provocative whipping boys are individuals who actively irritate other children: they can therefore generate the situations in which they are bullied.

Aggression in the Schools also challenges the conventional assumption that the deviance of the victim is a factor which triggers bullying. Olweus demonstrates that deviance (for example, notable difference in size, appearance or background) may be a feature of bullies as of victims. Hence deviance is merely a symptom of - and not a cause of - bullying. This is undeniably an important point. Yet a weakness of Olweus' argument is that no attempt is made to situate this phenomenon within the context of a broader alertness to power relations within the pupil social world. It simply appears as if the combination of 'deviance' and personal physical weakness sets up the conditions for a boy to become a victim. However, this may seriously underplay the social dimension of pupil relations. Above all it is arguable that if an understanding of the broad phenomenon of bullying within the context of school-day free-time in a mixed, multicultural inner city school is to be developed, then close attention has to be given to the relevant, context specific, factors which may play a part in determining which children are, or are not, bullied. For example, at City School it cannot simplistically be assumed that all children face an equal risk of being bullied irrespective of ethnic background.

The assumption that bullying can be understood both through reference to the personal attributes of bullies and victims has, however, proved highly influential from the pastoral point of view.

For example, Fighting, Teasing and Bullying : Simple and Effective Ways to Help Your Child (Pearce, 1989) assumes that improved 'self esteem' can help victims to escape from a cycle of bullying. At the same time, it is suggested that improved emotional control can enable bullies to treat other children with greater consideration. Though there is no need to doubt the pertinency of this advice, this perspective neglects the broader context within which bullying may occur. Further, where attention is given to the actual power relations within specific schools an opportunity may arise to explore an additional dimension of the predicament of those who are bullied.

An interesting feature of Stephenson and Smith's study, 'The Cleveland Project', reported in 'Bullying in the Junior School' (1989) is that an attempt is made to categorise different types of bullies or victims. Stephenson and Smith discount the stereotypical portrayal of most bullies as unstable unpopular children. Nevertheless, whilst asserting that most bullies are well liked, Stephenson and Smith recognise that some bullies do accord with this traditional stereotype. Unpopular bullies are seen to include: 'anxious bullies' (often children with low levels of success in the schooling system) and bully victims, the least popular of all children. The capacity to provoke inherent in the actions of bully victims in contexts where they are bullied, is also, interestingly, a feature of 'provocative victims', a group of children perceived to distress other children, thereby making themselves the target of bullying (1989, p. 52).

Somewhat predictably, research about bullying has tended to focus upon boys rather than girls. There are, however, some exceptions. Yates and Smith's 'Bullying in Two English Comprehensive Schools' (1989), focused upon bullying amongst third and fifth year pupils in two English Schools. The study contains valuable comparative data. No significant difference in the number of boys and

girls who admitted they were bullied was found: in School A more girls reported that they were bullied, whilst in School B more boys stated that they were bullied (1989, p. 24). However, the study also apparently provided firm evidence that most bullying was done by boys: 85% of boy victims reported that they were only bullied by boys whilst 48% of girl victims reported that they were bullied by boys and an additional 28% were bullied by both boys and girls. A mere 24% of girl victims reported being bullied exclusively by girls. Thus, even though both boys and girls may be bullied, the study appeared to show that more boys than girls become involved in bullying (Yates and Smith p. 26). More recently the large scale Sheffield study has also suggested that girls are less likely to bully, and less likely to be bullied by boys (Whitney and Smith,1993,p. 13).

Whilst we can now be reasonably confident that there is less bullying amongst girls than boys, it is important to recognise that there is still a significant problem of bullying amongst girls. Further, Keise's Sugar and Spice? Bullying in Single Sex Schools (1992) demonstrates that bullying does occur in single-sex girls schools. Research has also to be open to the possibility that serious bullying between girls may occur in subtle ways (through words not said, or through exclusion from friendship networks, for example) rather than through active physical aggression. There is a particular risk that bullying of this kind may not be noticed.

Is it possible that Askew (1989) in 'Aggressive Behaviour in Boys : to what extent is it institutionalised?' identifies an influence which encourages apparently higher rates of aggression of male pupils? She argues that there is a relationship between institutional features of schools and aggressive behaviour by, and amongst, male pupils. She perceives an authoritative 'masculine' style of management to be a factor liable to promote aggression amongst male pupils. The present

study has the potential to cast some light upon this issue. It will become clear in Chapter 12 that City School was strongly committed to a consultative managerial style; and women occupied in 'significant' numbers key positions in the management hierarchy.[3] The present study is therefore well placed to consider whether there is indeed a simple relationship between managerial style and aggression amongst male pupils.

There is growing recognition that some of the worst forms of bullying are experienced by children from minority ethnic groups. For instance, La Fontaine notes unpleasant examples of bullying directed at pupils from minority ethnic groups and describes some of the 'picking on' which occurs in both state and private schools as 'xenophobic' (1991, p. 5, p. 15). Kelly and Cohn's Racism in Schools : New Research Evidence (1988) conveys sharply the fact racist aggression is an especially virulent form of bullying.

'Ethnic Differences in Experiences of Bullying : Asian and White Children' (1993), a study prepared as part of the Sheffield Bullying Project, compares thirty three pairs of South Asian and white children. The purpose of this research was to isolate the role of ethnicity in bullying. The selected pairs were therefore of the same age and gender and attended the same schools. Interestingly, in this small sample, similar numbers of South Asian and white pupils encountered general bullying. However, the research confirmed the importance of racist name calling as an area to which schools should give attention when focusing upon bullying. No bullied white children encountered racist name calling whereas 50% of Asian victims had experienced this as well

as other forms of bullying.

Unfortunately 'Ethnic Differences' (1993) does not isolate the relationship between the ethnic composition of specific schools and the relative prospects of white and Asian children facing bullying. It will be seen below that the present study attempts to tease out this relationship in the case of City School. There is a possibility that children from all ethnic groups may be vulnerable to bullying in schools where their specific ethnic group constitutes a minority. A closely related point is also important. Bullying may also occur between children from ethnic minority groups. For example, Keise (1992) found that there was bullying of this kind in both the boys and girls schools she studied. We shall see that the present study focuses upon a school characterised by ethnic diversity and therefore it is necessary to consider the manifold possibilities for bullying between children from minority ethnic groups as well as by members of the dominant white population.

The evidence of the Sheffield Bullying Project now enables a number of points about the relationship between bullying and age to be stated with reasonable confidence. Firstly, as pupils progress through school age grades they are less likely to report that they are bullied. Secondly, children tend to be bullied by either older children, or children from the same school year. Thirdly, whereas children are apparently less likely to be bullied as they grow older, there is no evidence that older children are less likely to bully their juniors (Whitney and Smith, p. 21).

The data of this large scale study is clearly very important. Nonetheless, it has a potential to be somewhat misleading. There is a danger that older pupils may be specially reluctant to acknowledge that they are bullied (La Fontaine, 1991, p. 11). It is surely possible

that a major reason why less older children complain of bullying when completing questionnaires is that amongst older children far more aggression is reciprocated.

This chapter began by noting that research in three major academic disciplines assists in understanding pupil aggression. The chapter then examined the forms of aggression which will receive attention. I traced the development of interest in name calling and noted that this can cause distress. I focused upon high intensity fighting: it became clear that there is, to date, remarkably little research about this problem. I examined research about bullying. It became clear that some key observations can now be made with reasonable confidence. Nevertheless, it became apparent that studies rarely consider the micro divisions in power which may inform patterns of bullying in specific institutions. Further, the lack of long term ethnographic studies was recognised.

A central concern has been to explore ways in which the terms cussing (name calling), fighting and bullying are used and to clarify the meanings of these terms for the present study. Besides its potency as a descriptor of the experience of individuals who are victimised, the term bullying encapsulates in the public imagination many of the varied ways in which aggression may flourish in schools. In this broader generic sense much of the present study is concerned with 'bullying'. However, instances of reciprocated aggression (including fights) will also frequently receive attention.

Footnotes

Chapter 2

1. See for example Race, Sex and Class : A policy for equality Sex (1985) p. 6.

2. See How to do things with words Austin J.L. (1990) Oxford University Press (Oxford Paperbacks).

3. At City School two of the three Deputy Headteachers were women, and three of the six Heads of Years were women. During the course of the study women were appointed to the post of Head of Department in the three 'major' subject areas - Mathematics, Science and English.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONCEPT OF POWER AND ISSUES OF RELATIVE POWER

The meaning of the term power

That social power is an important property of interaction is widely appreciated. In Social Psychology, for example, Secord and Backman (1964) demonstrate that a focus upon social power (like examination of other properties of interaction: affect, attraction or feeling) has scope to give insight into the nature of social interaction (1964, p.246). Further, though Giddens in New Rules of Sociological Method identifies power in its widest sense with the 'transformative capacity of human agency', (1976, p. 111) he also stresses that power in its narrower relational form is a property of interaction.

Weber's classical definitions of power - 'the probability that an actor in a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his will despite resistance, regardless of the basis upon which this probability rests' (1978, p. 53) and 'the chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will even against the resistance of others' (1978, p.926) have had a pervasive influence within research in the social sciences. Power does not, however, always imply conflict; in New Rules of Sociological Method Giddens draws attention to the contingent character of the relationship between power and conflict, a point which can be obscured where attention is centred upon the notion of resistance. Thus, he stresses, power can still be held in the absence of resistance, where disparities in power are obscured by a unity in interest (1976, p. 112). This orientates attention towards recognition that social power can be a resource which groups or individuals bring into play in interaction in order to achieve desired

outcomes; and towards recognition that social power may find expression in the achievement of outcomes through the action of others.

At times, however, the concept of resistance is helpful, indeed essential. Goldman in 'Towards a Theory of Social Power' notes the significance of the concept of resistance in identifying comparative or relative power: that is, the power that an individual or social group has in comparison with another individual or social group in relation to a specific issue or conjunction of issues (1986, p. 180). Through appreciation of the resistance which is overcome, the power of an individual or social group in a position of strength becomes especially apparent.

Doubts about the possibility of creating an all embracive definition of the concept of power applicable in all the circumstances in which power may operate are expressed in Lukes' extended introduction to Power, (1986) a text of extracts from the writings of many leading thinkers which engage with the meaning and implications of the concept of power. Within his introduction, Lukes also isolates the two key issues which are almost inevitably addressed in studies of power and identifies these as an interest in the outcomes of power and in identification of those who hold power in any given context; identification, that is, of the 'locus' of power.

A recurrent feature of Lukes' introduction is a distaste for and distrust of emphasis upon will or intentionality. Thus, for example, Lukes attacks both Weber's definitions of power and also Russell's, (that is, 'power as the 'production of intended effects'[1]) definition of power (Lukes, 1986, p.1). With regard to evaluation of outcomes, Lukes moves beyond the potentially simplistic assumption that outcomes must be intended by the powerful and suggests instead that the key issue is whether the outcomes serves the interests of the

powerful.

For him the 'interest' does not merely reside in the intentional acts of social actor (or actors) with power, as is evident through his reference to and approval of Feinberg's work. (Lukes,1986,p.5)

> These interests, or perhaps more accurately, the things these interests are in, are distinguishable components of a person's well-being: he flourishes or languishes as they flourish or languish. What promotes them is to his advantage or in his interest, what thwarts them is to his detriment or against his interest.
>
> (Feinberg,1934,p.34)

Whether a concept of interest somewhat distanced from a balancing emphasis upon the specific intentionality of relevant social agents is of necessity helpful from the point of view of empirical work may be open to some doubt. There is an obvious risk, for example, that it will increase the possibility that data may be interpreted in a way which simply fits in with a predetermining scheme or grand narrative. Equally, it may be suspected that application of this concept can enable research to escape all possibility of 'falsification', where it is the researcher who decides what is in the 'interest' of a given social agent or group. However, Lukes (1986) refers approvingly to Goldman's refinement of the concept of interest in 'Towards a Theory of Social Power' (Goldman,1986). In this article, Goldman seeks to create a framework which is capable of clarifying empirical questions about power. Goldman emphasis the value of concretely locating the importance of issues in relation to which power is deemed to be held; these significant issues are seen to be those which affect the welfare of either the dominant or dominated parties. (1986,p.160)

It might be suspected that the underlying interpretational

difficulty still remains. Yet when seen within the context of other closely related aspects of Goldman's theory, (a stress upon the role of informational resources, recognition of the advantages which may accrue from concerted action, and consideration of the costs involved in action, for example) Goldman's concept of welfare issue, or interest, creates the possibility of identifying rather more sharply some of the consequences of the operation of power within social interaction.

These factors require fuller consideration. That resources giving power are not merely factors like wealth, traditionally identified as sources of power at a macro level, is stressed by Goldman. Whilst not discounting such macro influences, Goldman draws attention to the way in which informational resources are important since collective action in some circumstances may hinge upon confidence in a similar response by others (Goldman,1986,p. 171). Is it possible that this might shed light upon some school processes? It might explain, for example, situations in which pupils respond collectively in the face of real, or imagined, aggression. Further, when he focuses upon collective power, Goldman notes that it is possible for a solitary person to be entirely powerless in relation to specific issues whereas whilst acting in concert two or more people possess power (1986,p. 1970).

The relevance of 'cost' (a factor which allows scope for evaluation of the gains or losses involved in action, and a central feature of Exchange or Game Theory) is also recognised by Goldman (1986,p. 181). Again this concept may prove helpful when focusing upon aggression between pupils. However, where recourse is made to the concept of 'cost' there is a danger that potentially misleading assumptions about equivalence may follow. Cohen, for example, in

Modern Social Theory (1968) (in the context of reflection upon Blau's Exchange and Power in Social Life (1968)), notes that a priori variations in power may actually skew or distort the process of exchange (Cohen,1968,p. 123).

It was noted above that Lukes (1986) identifies an interest in the locus of power as the second major focal concern of research on power. Later in this chapter I shall identify the 'models' of relative power, which inform a variety of educational studies focusing directly or indirectly upon pupil social relations, by teasing out authors' responses to the basic question of 'who has power and over whom is it held?'

Whilst work within a variety of traditions has identified the way in which power may operate in covert ways, in ways which, for example, open or foreclose choices or possibilities, it is in the work of Foucault (1986 , 1991) with its explicit concern with the exploration of power in situations which are distanced from the most obvious, formal, state-driven, manifestations of power) that many insights capable of informing an exploration of the play of power within the micro world of a specific school are to be found. Interestingly, in 'The micro-sociological challenge of macro sociology: towards a reconstruction of social theory and methodology', (1981) Knorr Cetina argues that micro sociological studies have not, in general, set out to analyse power in specific micro contexts, although he notes, somewhat paradoxically that many empirical studies have actually highlighted implicitly, aspects of power. Moreover, Cetina recognises the significance of the work of Foucault and sees in it scope for the reconciliation of some of the grand questions which relate to the macro structure of society and the impact of power within specific micro contexts.

Foucault offers assistance in terms of the narrow purposes of this

study because of his interest in the 'how' and not the 'why' of power. In Disciplinary Power and Subjection' (1986) for example, Foucault draws upon a conception of society which sees human relationships as thoroughly infused with the play of power, and asserts the need for attention to centre upon the strategies and techniques of domination. By focusing upon the how of power, by raising the possibility that power may be known best through its prints or effects, Foucault channels the exploration of power in a new direction. He sees the 'play' of power as reaching to the centre of the way in which selves (or bodies) are constituted.

A central part of this approach is a stress upon the concept of surveillance. In Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison (1991) Foucault traces the gradual historical movement away from forms of control based upon crude co-ercive physical control to psychological forms of control achieved through the process of observation - a development seen most sharply and grimly in Bentham's panoptic ideal.[2] Although Foucault is principally constructing an argument at the level of general social processes, the concept of surveillance also makes us see aspects of pupil social relations in a new light. For example, some forms of bullying: bullying which operates without apparent recourse to physical aggression. Equally Foucault's awareness of how knowledge, control and manipulation of discourses (a second strategy of domination) is intertwined with power holds the possibility of fresh insight about pupil interaction. Both these concepts may therefore be of value in understanding the power relations embedded in the broad relationship between pupils groupings defined by race, age and gender.

Issues of relative power

The language of power and domination is a far from unusual feature of

research which focuses directly or indirectly upon the social world of school children. The articles contained in the policy orientated text Just a Bunch of Girls (Weiner, 1985) are, for example, imbued with an awareness of the means by which a white male minority still acts as a dominating force in society. It traces mechanisms which contribute to the continuing reproduction of this domination at school level. Articles within the collection leave few doubts about the power of males within specific institutions. In 'Mary, Jane and Virginia Wolf: Ten-year-old girls talking', for example, Holly notes the capacity of boys in one specific Primary School to secure an unfair proportion of playground space even though the girls in the school in question regard this state of affairs as unfair.

Yet it is arguable that the articles in Just a Bunch of Girls rely upon a somewhat simplistic model of power. Few concessions are made in the book to the possibility that the relative power of males and females may vary within the micro world of particular schools and instead a portrayal of male groupings as rather uniformally the possessors of greater power emerges. Furthermore because of the sharp awareness of the researchers of very real male capacities - the ability to monopolise teacher attention, the ability to dominate playground space, and the tendency to engage in highly distressing forms of sexual harassment - no real sense of variability in the involvement of particular male groupings in dominatory activities emerges.

Ironically, however, some articles reveal an openness to the possibility that the dominated experience of some girls cannot be encapsulated simply by reference to forms of sexism. In 'Mixed Blood - That Explains a lot of Things: An education in racism and sexism', for example, Suleiman (1985) utilises the biographical details of one

bright Turkish girl (in fact her own daughter) and highlights the manner in which some girls may be trapped in a double bind reflecting patterns of both racist and sexist domination. Suleiman demonstrates her case very effectively; but as soon as this possibility is conceded it must also follow that the experience of boys as dominators may also be subject to variation and it cannot therefore be taken for granted that the relationship between boys from ethnic minorities and white girls will inevitably mirror the pattern of relationship between white male and female groupings.

It was noted above that Just a Bunch of Girls is a book which seeks to focus upon policy issues. Indeed a central priority of the whole Open University Press Gender and Education series (the series of which it forms a part) is to focus upon good practice in the general area of equal opportunities and it is clearly against the backcloth of these aims that individual articles within Just a Bunch of Girls should be judged. However, it is not immediately clear that a helpful framework for reflection about policy is provided because of the tendency of these studies to rely upon a rather simplistic model of power relations in school.

Closer attention to one study in Just a Bunch of Girls, Jones' 'Sexual Tyranny: Male Violence in a mixed secondary School' (1986) illustrates the problem. Jones' study contains in essence a vitriolic portrayal of all males at one secondary school on the outskirts of London and attention is drawn to a range of commonplace forms of male violence in the institution. Little, if any, room is allowed for the possibility that not all men are complicit in this domination. Yet some details of this picture create unease. For example, Jones eloquently conveys the rainbow of highly colourful abuse directed by boys at girls, but no attempt is made to contextualise through

reference to the modes of speech used by girls when talking to each other, or when in conversations with boys. Other teacher researchers with city-based experience might find this portrayal of linguistically aggressive males and, apparently, a linguistically 'pure' female population somewhat less convincing.

It is arguable furthermore that Jones' article is inconsistent. Whilst she condemns racism (she points out that black girls have the hardest time of all in school), she herself engages in a parallel form of essentialist reasoning. In effect all men or boys in the institution on the grounds of biological accident carry the taint of 'original sin': all men stand condemned as a crude vision of the division of power in society is allied to a simplistic model of power divisions in the subject school. Jones study performs a valuable political function by highlighting so sharply the power of males in a specific institution. However, our facility to recognise other forms of exploitation may be undermined where the sights are so firmly fixed.

Power and domination in gender relations are, of course, handled with much greater subtlety elsewhere. For example, in Schools for the Boys: Co-education Re-assessed (1985) Mahoney provides a forceful evocation of patterns of male domination both in and outside the classroom. Yet at the same time she appreciates that not all boys are involved in dominatory acts and she even cites one third year boy who challenged the sexism of his teacher in class (p. 47). Her research demonstrates that it is possible to combine a sharp awareness of processes of oppression and domination in society, and political engagement with this, with a willingness to engage with some of the complexities which may be present whenever the expressions of power within a particular micro context are considered.

Whilst I do not at this point intend to focus in detail upon empirical work, many studies testify to the existence of hostility between children from different ethnic groups in specific educational institutions. Thus, insights about racial antagonisms may emerge in studies which do not place primary attention upon this area. For example, in Learning to Labour (1978) glimpses are provided of the underlying hostility between children from different ethnic groups. It becomes clear that: Asian, Afro Caribbean and white students frequent different rooms during free-time (p. 47); that Asian students are the targets of especially virulent forms of racialist abuse (p. 49); and that 'the lads' (white) are prepared to 'have a go' at Afro Caribbean students when white pupils are congregated in superior numbers (p. 48).

Fundamental divisions in power may be embedded in the relationship between children from different ethnic groups just as in gender relations. This clearly creates an awkward problem for there may not be an inevitable congruence between the independent power divisions which inform pupil interactions. For example, in 'Gender, Race and Power : The Challenge to Youth Work Practice' (1989) Parmar notes that all-Asian girls groups in schools and youth clubs face hostility from both white boys and girls. Where research seeks to focus upon a single sex institution, and where research explicitly strives to focus exclusively upon one set of power relations, then clearly there is no need to take into account the underlying problem. In the present study, however, this is not the case. I am explicitly concerned to explore what may be learnt about a given institution

through a focus upon how power relations may find expression within pupil aggression. This area of interest embraces therefore both gender and ethnicity.

Yet in order to encapsulate the complexity of pupil social life at City School, there is also a need to recognise that age grade membership (that is, membership of a particular school year) may also be a significant source of power for individuals and groups. In Age Class Systems : Social Institutions and Politics based upon Age (1985) Bernardi focuses upon societies in which age (that is, membership of a specific age set, not physiological age) determines status, rights, responsibility and power. The informal social relations of pupils in an English inner city school are clearly far removed from societies in which age set membership is the key organising feature of social structure. However, as children from different school years interact during school-day free-time, it is possible, even probable, that children institutionally positioned in senior age grades will derive some status and power from their advanced location.

Whereas interest in both gender and ethnicity has expanded greatly in recent years, there has, in general, been far less interest in the impact of age grading upon pupil social relations. However, where, as here, the primary interest is in exploring pupil interaction outside the classroom, much may be learnt through consideration of the significance of age grading. This may, for example, further challenge any easy assumption that there is an inevitable congruence between the various power divisions which are embedded in, and inform, pupil interactions.

In the present study's exploration of aggressive forms of pupil interaction at City School my primary interest is in gender, ethnicity and age grading. It is important therefore to stress that I do not

regard these factors as the only source of power or weakness. Many factors may determine the power of individuals or groups in specific interactive contexts, - physical size, reputation, contact with siblings and 'roughness', for example. Though not of primary interest within the present study, I do, at times, note the significance of such factors.

The concept of 'number' is the most significant of the additional factors which receive limited attention in the present study. In Men and Women of the Corporation (1977) Kanter demonstrates that number may bestow power in some work contexts. Interestingly, however, she does not suggest that there is a simple relationship between number and power. Thus, whilst in many situations numerical advantage gives power, in other work contexts the noticeability of someone from a minority may also empower.

At the beginning of this chapter I explored the meaning of the term power. Besides noting the significance of Weber's influential definitions of power, I recognised the value of Foucalt's radically different way of studying the play of power through a focus upon its effects. The significance of surveillance and the ability to manipulate discourses was noted.

In the second section of this chapter it was seen that several, not one, set of power relations may be embedded within pupil interactions. Further, it was seen that there may not necessarily be congruence between these influences. The child (or group) weak at one time and place may therefore be powerful at another time and place in school. I suggested that a goal of this study is to engage with this complexity.

The theme of power is of central importance throughout the present study. However, it is important to stress that my primary objective is to explore the perception of pupil aggression which emerges through long term ethnographic study as a teacher researcher in a mixed, multicultural inner city school. In pursuit of this goal I am interested in understanding how power relations inform, and are used by, pupils within aggressive interactions rather than in abstract or theoretical reflection upon the concept of power itself.

All the chapters which set out the data of the present study include sections of commentary. These sections engage with the complexities which underpin pupil interactions and draw attention to points of particular significance. In these sections I also seek to tease out the power relations which inform pupil interactions. At a number of points within these sections I identify ways in which the work of major theoreticians helps us to see aspects of pupil interaction in a new way. In Chapter 5, for example, I note the way in which Foucault's concept of surveillance assists in understanding the experience of isolated and weak pupils who face constant cussing.

One additional point requires some explanation. In the title to this study I have used the terms cussing, fighting and bullying. Yet it has already been noted that Part Two includes chapters which focus upon gender, age and 'race' as well as chapters about these aggressive forms of pupil interaction. This is because an understanding of the power relations which inform aggressive interactions only becomes a genuine possibility when attention is given to the nature of the relationships between the various key groupings which constitute a given school population. At the same time it will become clear below that the chapters which focus on gender, age and 'race' also house many instances of reciprocated aggression or bullying.

Footnotes

Chapter 3

1. 'Power may be defined as the production of intended effects'. This definition is from Power : A New Social Analysis Russell, B. London: Allen and Unwin (1938) p. 25.

2. Foucault describes Bentham's Panopticon in Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison (Part 3. 3.).

PART TWO

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, attention is given to some of the important criticisms which are made of ethnographic research and the strategies adopted in the present study to make data as reliable as possible are outlined. In the second, attention turns to the present study. Some of the relevant insights from the preliminary M.A. study are noted, and City School is described. Finally the main research techniques used in the course of the present study are outlined.

Section One

Ethnographic Research

In this section I shall focus upon the claim that ethnographic research is non scientific and that the data which it produces is unreliable. I shall then identify the strategies used within the present study to safeguard the reliability of data. I recognise that ethnographic research is also open to a radical atack from anti realist schools of thought which highlight the difficulty, if not impossibility, of representing the world in a way which steps free from pre-given linguistic or mental categories. However, I intend to do no more than begin the section by noting this problem briefly whilst citing in response the pragmatic reply favoured by Hammersley in Reading Ethnographic Research A Critical Guide (1990).

a) Criticisms of ethnographic research

Hammersley uses the term 'anti realism' as a descriptor of schools of thought (structuralism, post-structuralism and

Wittgensteinian language philosophy, for example) which have furthered 'the tendency towards rejection of the possibility of representation' (1990 p.14). He achieves a balance between acceptance of the force of the criticisms which anti realist thought makes (by, for example, demonstrating when our knowledge of the external world must inherently be mediated) and his own defence of ethnographic research. For example, whilst he expresses hostility to 'naive realism' (the idea that there is a single world independent of us about which we have direct and therefore certain knowledge), he defends 'subtle realism', which is sensitively alert to the problems inherent in any attempt to represent the 'real' world.

At the same time, Hammersley also provides a defence against the total relativism which can arise when emphasis is placed upon the constructed character of all accounts of the social universe. For example, he adopts a pragmatic position in relation to the concepts of truth and certainty and argues:

> To claim that something is true is not incompatible with a recognition that our judgement about it may be wrong. I believe that we can never be absolutely certain about the truth of anything, not even in the natural sciences or in our personal lives. On the other hand, there are many things about whose truth we are very confident and about which we have every right to be confident. What I am arguing here is that we can have good reasons for believing that something is true or false without being certain about the validity of the claim. We rely on a whole host of assumptions about the world in our everyday lives, and while many of them are probably approximately true, we can never be absolutely certain of the truth of any of them. Yet this ever-present uncertainty does not undermine our use of the concept of truth.
>
> (1990, p. 59, italicised in original)

Through the adoption of a concept of 'truth' which highlights scope for reasonable certainty, (albeit limited by the ultimate uncertainty of everything), Hammersley is able to suggest criteria which can assist in the formation of judgments about the validity of ethnographic accounts. He explores, for example, how criteria like 'plausibility' and 'credibility' may be helpful (1990, p. 63). In 'Evaluation of a study of Gender imbalance in primary classrooms' (Hammersley, 1993), which analyses 'Gender imbalances in the primary classroom. An interactional account '(French and French, 1993), Hammersley makes extensive use of his concept of 'plausibility' in assessing the merits of an ethnographic account.

Apart from this anti realist critique, the most common of the varied charges which have been made in arguing that ethnography is 'non-scientific' are (i) the accusation that there is a pronounced danger of 'facts' being assembled in unacceptably selective or distorting ways; (ii) the claim that it is not possible to generalise from the narrow basis of one specific case study; and (iii) the claim that there is no scope for external validation to be provided through replication. I will begin consideration of these questions with an examination of the process of gathering data.

(i) In ethnographic research there is an inevitable danger that convictions may obtrude in the course of fieldwork and influence the selection of 'facts' perceived to be of significance. Allied to this is a parallel risk that beliefs or opinions formulated prior to the process of research may obtrude when an attempt is made to analyse data in a rather more detached way. Interestingly, even 'great' ethnographic studies may face this accusation.

For instance, in Learning to Labour (1978) Willis attaches symbolic importance to specific actions of 'the lads' and sees their

smoking at the school gates and celebratory boozing on the last day in school as actions of 'resistance'. Without specific reference to the smoking or drinking habits or other relevant social actors, however, the validity of this argument is by no means clear. Thus, Willis does not investigate the smoking habits of 'ear 'oles' within the vicinity of the school. Nor does he investigate the drinking habits of teaching staff on the last day of term. It is possible that in this instance an underlying view of socio economic relations which prioritises and even romanticises the experience of disaffected 'lads' generated a particular perception of these actions at the expense of other potentially significant explanatory routes. It is arguable that there is no *a priori* reason for assuming that the drinking of 'the lads' must represent an act of 'resistance'; drinking is after all pleasurable and social drinking very commonly occurs when people mark the passage of time. The boys' social drinking could therefore merely mirror that of adults in a way which does not give grounds for an inference of 'resistance'. Yet because Willis does not formally provide contextual details of the drinking habits of other actors, our scope to recognise this or other explanatory possibilities is limited.

In all ethnographic research there is a danger that distortions may occur because of strongly held convictions. In the present study distortion was most likely to occur because of the present researcher's strong sense of frustration about inequities and injustices within secondary provision. Throughout the years of fieldwork, a sense of amazement and anger persisted that 11 - 14 year old pupils could go through school on a site with no playing fields and three meagre playgrounds little bigger than tennis courts, and it led to a concern for change. Moreover this amazement was reinforced by subsequent work in a middle school with a similar number of

children based on a school site with a swimming pool, ample playgrounds and large playing fields in a town outside the city.

Yet a credible counter argument can also be advanced for claiming that the insights of research fired by such anger or frustration can in fact be valuable. Chisholme, for example, in 'Action Research : some methodological and political considerations', notes that action research has primarily been characterised by a 'considered rational coolness' which draws upon a sense of the possibility and importance of value neutrality in social science (1990, p. 253). She believes an element of self deception sometimes characterises such work. It may rest upon taken for granted values - the values of a patriarchal society, for example. By contrast, Chisholm advocates the value of research characterised by 'explicit commitment' and considers that, paradoxically, fresh possibilities for insight may be created where research is underpinned by firmly held beliefs (1990, p. 253). From this perspective a determination to strive to maintain appropriate standards of scholarship within fieldwork can be combined with strongly held convictions. Moreover through reflections upon the imperfections of research - imperfections not hidden behind a screen of imagined neutrality - fresh possibilities for insight may arise.

(ii) One of the 'classical' features of natural science is the construction of experiments or models which create scope for the identification of general laws which are applicable in related situations. Yet because ethnography is at heart a hermeneutical enterprise, which focuses upon human activity in potentially unique situations, the grounds upon which it may lead to generalisation are unclear. That qualitative educational research can be set up in ways which may at least maximise the generalizability of research findings is, however, demonstrated by Scholfield in 'Increasing the

Generalizability of Qualitative Research' (1993). Chapter 2 referred to Scholfield's own important long term study Black and White in School (1982) which followed the first four years of a desegregated school. It is therefore interesting to see that in 'Increasing the Generalizability...' Scholfield stresses the valuable potential for generalisation which arises from long term qualitative research characterised by an alertness to where an institution may be in its 'life cycle' (1993, p. 216). Scholfield advocates the selection of research sites which are in some way 'typical'. Further, she concedes the value of the 'thick description' typical of ethnography (p. 209). At the same time, she notes that this capacity may be lost where the focus is upon more than one research site (1993, p. 211). A further dimension to the generalisability issue should be noted. It is arguable that generalisation to other contexts is not inherently necessary for educational research to be worthwhile.

Ethnographic studies which utilise qualitative techniques clearly possess the potential to provide helpful insights about specific institutions at specific points in time. The present study cannot be described as Action Research. It did not, for example, involve a monitored intervention. Nonetheless it will become clear below that the lives of some children at City School were blighted by bullying and the present study is clearly in a good position to contribute to informed debates about these problems.

(iii) Because ethnographic studies both utilise qualitative research techniques and typically focus upon one institution at a historically specific point in time there is little or no possibility for replication: there is no scope for subsequent researchers to accumulate data under identical conditions. But it can therefore be argued there is no adequate way of checking the reliability of data

and that such ethnographic research has little obvious value. Whilst the force of this criticism has to be conceded, it is arguable that the pursuit of external validation through an emphasis upon replicability in part misunderstands the objective of qualitative research. For example, in 'Increasing the Generalizability ' Scholfield argues:

> ... at the heart of the qualitative approach is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researchers individual attributes and perspectives. The goal is not to produce a standardized set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced. Rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and perspective on a situation that is based on and consistent with detailed study of that situation.
>
> (1993,p. 202) italicised in original.

Recognising the impracticality of replication in qualitative studies, Scholfield places greater emphasis upon the strategies adopted within a study to ensure 'internal validity' (1993,p. 202).

b) The reliability of data within the present study

In the dynamic process of research the ethnographer actually has a vested interest in ensuring that events or processes are depicted accurately and reliably. Genuine illumination can after all only emerge where these standards are achieved. Furthermore the ethnographer can employ strategies which may optimise the 'internal validity' of a study. I now turn attention to a consideration of these strategies in the case of the present research.

For all male researchers, it is inevitably very difficult to shake off the sexist bias which may constantly encroach upon one's way of perceiving the world and which may encroach upon one's mode of

reasoning. In Non Sexist Research Methods : A Practical Guide (Eichler,1980), Eichler draws attention to the many and varied ways in which sexism may intrude into the research process. Yet where male researchers begin to recognise and acknowledge some of the ways in which their view of the social world may be distorted, then the possibility of a more perceptive understanding may arise. It will become clear below that within the present study I try to identify instances in which I failed to look at school life in a balanced way. For example, when the phenomenon of high intensity fighting was being examined, I came to recognise that fights which exclusively involved boys might not take an identical form to fights which exclusively involved girls. Previously I had just assumed girls fought in the same way as boys.

In Research Methods in Education, Cohen and Manion define triangulation as 'the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (1989, p. 269). Further, they demonstrate that the reliability of research is significantly increased where there is not an over dependence upon one method of data collection. Likewise, Becker in 'Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation' draws attention to the significance of the possession of different kinds of evidence which assist in the formulation of judgements about the validity of insights. Like Cohen and Manion, Becker argues that confidence is greater where different kinds of evidence is possessed (1978, p. 318).

The present study includes data gathered through two separate participant observer roles (as Head of Year and as a Lunch Time Supervisor). In addition, the study involved an extensive

programme of unstructured group interviews with pupils. I shall try to make it clear where observations merely reflect data acquired through one research strategy and where several types of data provide mutual support.

The present study also contains references to a preliminary M.A. investigation at City School. It would be misleading to claim that the present study created a formal opportunity for time-related triangulation, since I have already drawn attention to the limited scale of the M.A. work. Nonetheless the present research provided a valuable opportunity to refine, qualify and develop observations formed in the course of the M.A. study.

The fact that I constantly engaged in this process helps to increase the overall reliability of the current research. Further, the core phase of data collection for the present study lasted three years and one term, and, in addition, I taught at City School for eight years. As a consequence of this long term involvement in the life of the Lower School,I had every opportunity to develop a balanced understanding of key aspects of pupil interaction.

I wish finally in this section simply to record two of the key ethical considerations which placed necessary and desirable limits upon the process of data collection. Firstly, my sense of involvement in City School's efforts to foster and nurture good race relations was reflected in my very guarded approach to this theme when pupils were interviewed in groups. Secondly, although my occupational role as a Head of Year provided a valuable opportunity to develop a clear understanding of problematic aspects of pupil interaction, it was vital that I did not abuse this privileged position. As a consequence I have at times excluded material which, I can assure the reader, would lend strong support to the main lines of argument developed in the study.

Section Two

Studying City School

The first study of school playgrounds at City School was prepared as part of a taught M.A. course and was therefore conducted and written up in a short time span. It relied heavily upon one week's observation of the playgrounds, supported by a brief survey completed by pupils in two classes. Notwithstanding these obvious limitations, a number of points of interest concerning the relationship between anti racist and anti sexist teaching and pupil life at playground level were raised.

The study indicated that the anti sexist curriculum had made little impact on the experience of girls at playground level. Boys still overwhelmingly dominated desirable play space. At the same time, a rather more positive impression of playground life emerged when race relations were considered: ethnic identity was not found to be a factor which determined access to playground games.

Unfortunately a 'race' problem clearly remained. As pupils aged, or 'matured', they appeared to become rather more rigidly separated in their playtime social life along lines which reflected ethnic divisions. Further, it was clear that the limited M.A. study was not in a position to identify the rather more subtle forms of tension or antagonism which could exist in the relationship between children from different ethnic groups.

Pupils at City School were taught in classes which solely comprised pupils from specific school years or age grades and pupil activity at playtime appeared to mirror this organisational arrangement, for pupils overwhelmingly played with other children from the same school year. The mere fact that children tended to play with other children from within the same age grade was neither surprising

or worrying to teachers and there were no signs that City School regarded this arrangement as problematic.

However, when the playgrounds were observed, it rapidly became apparent that the relationship between pupils from different school age grades was not always easy. For example, older pupils routinely dominated the most desirable play space and were prepared to remove younger children from this space when they so desired. Within the context of a limited M.A. study, it was not possible to explore how older children asserted control over desirable space. Nor was it possible to examine whether younger children encountered other more serious forms of bullying by older pupils. The importance of giving much closer attention to age grading within the present study nonetheless became fully apparent in the preliminary M.A. research.

This earlier research was also interesting and useful in illustrating well the dangers of placing tight, potentially arbitrary, 'borders' upon an area of concern. The M.A. study began with a determination to stick to a narrow focus upon the three hard surface playgrounds at the Lower School site, but it became clear that play outside the designated playgrounds also had to be considered. For example, it was seen that boys (and especially older boys) dominated the hard surface playgrounds and that as a consequence girls and some younger boys creatively adapted to this situation by using other parts of the school site in their play; even the stairs and corridors of the main teaching block were in fact frequently and systematically used in chasing games!

In the present research I learnt from this experience. I aimed to develop an understanding of 'bullying' or unpleasantness between pupils and have already noted that the primary interest was in pupil social relations during the course of school-day free-time. However,

as will be seen below, data at times needs to be included to show the way in which problems rooted in free-time social relations encroached upon lesson time. For example, when fights are examined (Chapter 6) we see that fights can, on occasion, occur during or continue into lessons as well as in the playground.

Description of the school

City School was based on a split site. A busy main road separated the Upper School (ages 15-18) from the Lower School (ages 11-14).[1] During the course of the school-day there was a great deal of movement between the two sites and this involved both staff and pupils. This was largely because some specialist departments had facilities on only one site.

During the lunch hour, Lower School pupils were required to remain on site unless going home, with permission, for lunch. In contrast, older pupils were allowed to go out into the locality during the lunch break; they were not, however, permitted to go to the Lower School site.

The school was popular locally and was judged to be 'successful' by the L.E.A.[2] Throughout the research period City School retained its full roll of 1000 pupils. There were 180 pupils in each school year (Years 7-11) and in addition the school had a Sixth Form.

During the time of the study I was the Head of Year for two separate school years. In both these years, boys outnumbered girls because of the tendency of some parents to prefer, if possible, to send daughters to single-sex schools. In the first of the two school years specifically studied, (which I will call Cohort A in this study) there were at one stage 40 more boys than girls. In the case of the second of the two years (which I will refer to as Cohort B) this tendency was even more pronounced: at one stage there were 49 more

boys than girls on the roll of this school year.[3]

City School was characterised by ethnic diversity. Broadly 50% of pupils were from a white British family background and born in the UK, whilst roughly 30% of pupils were from Afro Caribbean families, also overwhelmingly born in the UK. The remaining 20% of the school population included South Asian pupils, children from Greek, Turkish and Kurdish families, and children from a number of African states. Some of these children had been born outside the UK and so the school had an active ESL department. At one stage during the study, over 35 different language groups were represented in the school population.

Like many inner city schools, City School had a relatively high rate of pupil mobility in comparison with many suburban schools. For example, during the two years that I was Head of Year for Cohort A, there were 37 changes to the pupil roll for the year group. Because the local authority tended to place pressure upon schools to fill any vacancies reasonably rapidly, one consequence of this mobility was, at times, a tendency for the disparity in the numbers of boys and girls on year rolls to grow. The process of mobility could moreover create fluctuations in the proportions of pupils within specific years from particular ethnic groups.

In the Lower School, pupils were taught in mixed ability classes and one unfortunate consequence of a relatively high rate of mobility was that over time distortions could also develop in the ability spread within specific teaching groups. There was no guarantee that the ability spread of late entrants into the school would mirror the ability level of children leaving, and there was also no guarantee that tutor groups would be equally affected by mobility into or out of the school.

Whilst the school was a genuine comprehensive, in the sense that

within the pupil population there were children of very varying levels of ability, during the years of the study there had been some concern within the school that there had been a gradual increase in the number of pupils entering the school with low 'reading ages'. In the case of Cohort B, for example, 49 pupils registered reading ages below their chronological age in a diagnostic test administered shortly after their entry to secondary school; and 21 children registered scores substantially more than two years below their calendar age. During the time of the present research the school developed a very effective Special Needs Department which provided both in-class and, in some circumstances, withdrawal support. Inevitably, however, because a significant proportion of pupils entered secondary school with comparatively weak literacy skills, the level of support available was inadequate for some children with special needs.

When I explore the policy implications of the present study in Chapter 12, I shall draw attention to the fact that City School was a progressive institution, firmly committed to the comprehensive ideal and to the adoption of innovative forms of good practice. At this point it is helpful to note that this stance also informed all the school's work with children with special needs. In A Sociology of Special Education (1982), Tomlinson shows that many children with special needs (and above all those who attend Special Schools) are provided with a truncated and inadequate curriculum. The research at City School took place prior to the implementation of the National Curriculum and in the era therefore when Tomlinson's study was an especially powerful indictment of provision for children with special needs in both comprehensive and special schools. It is important to note, therefore, that the approach towards provision for children with special needs at City School was very firmly based upon the ideal of

maximising the access of every child to the full, rich, school curriculum. This approach informed, for example, the school's work with statemented children who were entitled to part time individual support. This support was provided in the mainstream class and there was, in general, effective liaison between subject and support teachers.

The outdoor facilities available for the 540 Year 7 to Year 9 pupils based in the Lower School were limited and unimpressive. All three hard surface playgrounds on the site were very small. Two were little bigger than tennis courts, and even the largest (which also doubled as the thoroughfare to the Upper School site) was only twice this size. There were, in addition, a number of small grass areas on the site, but these were almost invariably 'out of bounds' to pupils during the winter months.

However, senior staff in the school were aware of the limitations of the Lower School site and had taken a number of imaginative steps to improve facilities and the general environment of the Lower School. Four permanent basketball posts had been installed in one playground and basketballs were available for pupils to borrow upon request during the lunch hour. Pupils were also allowed to remain in the school building in the lunch break and a number of rooms were available for use as common rooms by pupils from specific age grades. Most impressively the school had developed an attractive garden area on a disused piece of land adjoining the Lower School site and owned by the school. A plan of the Lower School site is provided in Appendix 1. An earlier plan of the Lower School site, which predates the development of the school garden, is included in Appendix 2. This plan also indicates the routes of chasing games at the times of the M.A. study.

Research Techniques

In Chart A the programme of research followed in the present study is outlined. It involved a phase when I interviewed pupils in groups and an extensive period when I worked in helpful participant observer roles.

CHART A

YEAR	RESEARCH
ONE	Programme of group interviews
TWO	Head of Year (Cohort A, Year 8) Lunch Time Supervisor (One day each week)
THREE	Head of Year (Cohort A, Year 9) Lunch Time Supervisor (One day each week)
FOUR	Head of Year (Cohort B, Year 8) Lunch Time Supervisor (Three days each week)

i) Interviews

The interview phase was the first stage of formal work upon the present project. It took place during a term when I was on unpaid leave from my post as a Head of Department. I returned to school one day each week to do supply work. This enabled me to retain contact with examination classes; and it also gave me an opportunity to interview pupils.

Following an advertisement placed in the weekly school newsletter, 71 pupil volunteers took part in the interview programme. Interviews took place in small groups which involved between two and

six children. I chose this arrangement because I believed that it would give pupils the confidence to express views openly and because I also felt that it would lead to interesting exchanges of ideas. Interviews were unstructured. Although I broadly followed a planned schedule, I was prepared, in part, to allow open discussion which related to my key interests.

Fuller details of the interview schedule are provided in Appendix 3.

ii) Participant Observer Roles

Head of Year

During the main years of the research I was a Head of Year and this allowed me to monitor many aspects of school life which had been the subject of discussion at the interview stage. I kept a diary in which I recorded the types of problems about which pupils expressed their concerns of fears: worries, for example, about bullying or teasing in the playground. I also kept a record of the types of incidents referred to me by dinner ladies or teachers. As part of this exercise I kept an especially detailed record of the referral of pupils because of involvement in high intensity (that is, 'real' fights).

I have already noted that during the time of the research I was the Head of Year for two separate age cohorts. I was the Head of Year for Cohort A when they were in Years 8 and 9, and for the Cohort B when they were in Year 8. At points within the study where it is necessary to distinguish between these two, I use the following system: Cohort A classes indicated by a single letter and Cohort B a double letter. For example, Class 8N (hence Cohort A); Class 8NN (hence Cohort B).

Lunch time supervisor

Throughout the research period I carried out a lunch time duty in the

dining hall one day each week. I also ran a mixed soccer club for boys and girls in my year group during one lunch break each week. These tasks allowed me an opportunity to develop a closer awareness of pupil experience during school-day free-time.

In the final year of the study, during a phase when City School was experiencing some difficulty in attracting and maintaining its full complement of lunch time supervisors, I became an official lunchtime supervisor (i.e. a paid lunch time supervisor) on three days each week. I then helped to supervise in the dining hall whilst pupils were eating their meals and went around in the school building or the school grounds during the rest of the lunch hour. Through this supervisory role I was able to learn a great deal more about pupils' experiences and was, moreover, able to gain greater awareness of some of the difficulties faced by largely untrained - and certainly underpaid - lunch time supervisors.

In addition to the research techniques I have formally identified I should finally note that I taught at City School over a nine year period. I joined the school as a Head of Department and throughout my early years in the school I was also a Form Tutor. After three years at City School I was out of school for one year whilst working towards an M.A. degree. I then worked in the school as a Head of Department for a further two years before becoming a Head of Year during the main phase of the research.

Footnotes

Chapter 4

1. Years 7, 8 and 9 were based in the Lower School.

2. One ironic consequence of this assessment was that City School tended to be less well resourced than other secondary schools in the same local authority.

3. These figures constantly fluctuated, reflecting the process of movement into, and out of, the authority.

CHAPTER 5

CUSSING

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first, data is presented and in the second a commentary upon this data is provided. The specific meaning of the term 'cussing' for pupils is clarified in the first section. The section also considers examples of the variety of forms of cussing in evidence at City School. The impact of cussing is considered and it is seen that great distress is caused to children who are bullied through repeated verbal abuse.

An appreciation of the power divisions which inform the identified pattern of cussing becomes more obvious in the second section whose primary aim is to expose the relationship between patterns of abuse between pupils and inequalities in power. A dispiriting feature of life at City School is that those who are powerful use their power in abusing the weak or vulnerable.

Within the commentary, consideration is also given to the thorny question of how cusses may be interpreted. The phenomenon of mother cussing (the form of verbal abuse most closely associated with the build up to a high intensity fight) receives particular attention. However, we also begin to see why some children are apparently reasonably well-equipped to cope with abuse which causes great distress to less resilient peers.

Section One

Data

At City Schools pupils had their own term for the process of making derogatory remarks about fellow pupils - 'cussing'. Cussing was essentially an umbrella term. It covered unfriendly teasing and nicknaming; direct comments about the qualities of classmates as well as indirect comments about mothers and families; messages transmitted through the spoken word as well as non verbal communication through pictures or gestures.

Amongst pupils, teachers and lunch time supervisory staff at the school there was a general consensus that cussing constituted 'a problem'. Cussing was rife within the school. A considerable amount of valuable form tutor time was taken up with problems arising from this practice, since cussing caused distress for those who were the target of abuse. It was far from unusual for Heads of Years to have to 'speak to' form groups in assembly because of quarrels which had resulted from this practice. On such formal occasions teachers tended to employ the term 'name calling' rather than 'cussing'.

Irrespective of the term in usage, it was abundantly clear that in addition to upsetting individuals, cussing tended to have a wider ripple effect. In lessons, for example, exchanges of insults could be highly disruptive, with pupils swopping series of insults which both entertained classmates and 'wound up' teachers. More seriously, cussing all too easily led to high intensity fights. One form of cussing - cussing someone's mother - appeared to have an automatic trigger effect, entitling the cussee to strike out at the cusser; a situation which, in the presence of an appropriate audience, could escalate into real physical conflict.

Whilst cussing could be a source of disruption during lessons, it could also cause arguments in other contexts during the course of

school-day free-time since many of the situations in which pupils found themselves during 'playtime' (for example, sitting around talking in form rooms or standing in lunch queues) provided ideal settings for cussing to flourish. What forms of cussing then were found within the school?

Comments about clothes and physical appearance

a) Clothes

The appearance of class teachers is constantly monitored by pupils. Often teachers leave major alterations to their personal appearance, the growth of a beard, a dramatically new hairstyle, a move to contact lenses, until the holidays in an attempt to avoid humourous, but occasionally embarassing, remarks. Pupils also have a keen interest in the fashions of the recent, or not so recent, past. At present it is the fashions of the 'Swinging Sixties' that have the most immediate dramatic effect. In a textbook or in an educational video, the sight of a teacher in flared trousers can reduce the most scholarly groups to helpless laughter! Obviously many comments about the dress sense of teachers are witty and harmless and the values of a classroom atmosphere in which humour is allowed to florish - and especially of an atmosphere in which a teacher skilfully utilises a sense of fun and humour to sustain pupils' engagement with work tasks - has been recognised.[1]

Equally, some pupil comments about the dress sense of other pupils are innocent and enjoyed by all. Thus, for example, Komo (a Year 10 student) laughingly recalled how his arrival at school in an expensive sheepskin coat rapidly earned him the name 'Larry the Lamb' in his first few days of secondary schooling. Nevertheless, amongst fashion conscious early adolescents acute embarrasment can arise for those whose clothes differ most sharply from current conventions. In a discussion which involved two Year 9 girls, Martha and Sheila, for example, Martha commented on the treatment of

one of her form mates:

Martha:	Like they cuss this boy about his trainers.
AS:	Right
Martha:	They cuss him about his trainers, his jumper. You've got to look smart not to get cussed though.

The bulk of comments about clothing centred upon a limited range of qualities. Clothes that were shabby, out of date or, most seriously of all, clothes that have previously been worn by older brothers and sisters were the subject of jibes. In the course of a group discussion, four Year 9 boys Carl, Steve, Ben, Aaron reeled off many of the comments made about clothes:

Aaron:	Old fashioned
AS:	Old fashioned
Aaron:	Never washed
AS:	Never washed
Carl:	Flares
AS:	Flares. Any other types?
Ben:	Ankle trimmers, swingers
Aaron:	Hand-me-downs
Carl:	Hand-me-downs (general laughter)
AS:	What are ankle swingers?
Ben:	When they just come up high.[2]
AS:	Oh I thought we'd had that. Anything else? What about training shoes? Anything else?
Ben:	Yeah. No names (general laughter) or they're talking.
Steve:	Cos they've got big holes in, they're talking to you.

A strong economic dimension underpinned much cussing which on the surface merely appeared to be about fashion, since it was pupils from the poorest homes who were most likely to wear 'hand me downs', out of date fashions and ankle swingers. The comments of two Year 7 girls, Janet and Agatha were interesting in this context. When asked whether pupils were ever cussed about clothes they replied:

Janet:	Yeah. You got it from Oxfam and all that. Jumble sales.
Agatha:	You can't afford certain clothes.

Somewhat similar observations were made in the course of a group discussion which involved five Year 7 girls.

AS:	What types of name calling happens? Is it all about parents or do you get other sorts?
Molly:	Well like 'you can't afford this' and when you go to playtime and all that they say like 'you live in a dustbin and can't afford to buy clothes' and all that and 'you go shopping in Oxfam' and things like that.

In this type of cussing there was frequently an inference that the cussees could only afford to shop in the cheapest places. Whilst Oxfam was the most frequently mentioned shop, sometimes references would be made to supermarkets. Gideon, an 'A' level Sociology student, made this point when he reflected upon his experience in the Lower School:

Gideon:	Yeah and people were very wicked. I mean, for instance, the trainers to wear were Adidas or Puma and if you didn't

> wear these, I mean like if you bought anything from Tescoes and anyone found out it was you know like quite a laughing matter. So you really had to check it out if you didn't want to be laughed at.

Certain items of clothing or footwear were perceived to be of particular importance in the presentation of an appropriately 'cool' image and the inability of some to afford the items of dress to project this style successfully could be amusing for others. When I pressed Nora and Dana, two Afro Caribbean Year 9 pupils, about why some pupils made critical comments about the footwear of classmates their responses drew attention to this phenomenon:

AS:	Why do you think that happens?
Nora:	I don't know, cos they've got their bad trainers they think they're all hard.
Dana:	Yeah and they're expensive and yours are all cheap and you can't afford it or whatever
Nora:	Yeah and they call you tramp and things like that and say your family's poor.

[3]

In marked contrast no evidence emerged from the interviews to suggest that pupils who could afford especially expensive clothing were subject to cussing in the same way as the poorest children. They ran the risk of mild, humorous , comments (for example, the Larry the Lamb comment directed at Komo), which lacked the cutting edge of comments directed at the least well off and which were only offensive for the over sensitive. The difference in the treatment of the poor and the affluent was summarised well by Martha:

> If you're well off and don't start cussing

> them they won't start cussing you, but if you start cussing them then they will start cussing you back. But if you're not well off they will start cussing you anyway.

b) Physical Appearance

In an environment in which cussing flourishes there are, unsurprisingly, risks associated with even marginal differences in appearance. The fat, the thin, the very short and the very tall are all liable to be the victims of cruel and hurtful remarks. Dean from Year 7, commented on the experience of many small pupils:

> Most of the time, say there's someone sort of little they might keep calling him sort of 'midget' or something.

The extent to which such commonplace remarks are genuinely hurtful clearly depends upon a range of factors: the characters of the cusser and the cussee: the context of the remark; and, perhaps most importantly of all, the response of any audience. Whether a remark is 'cruel' depends not so much upon what is said as upon the interpretation placed upon the comment by the relevant social actors. Pupils undoubtedly differed greatly in their capacity to cope with cusses about physical appearance. Some recipients were able cheerfully to accept remarks, even turning them to their own advantage, whilst others lacked this facility. Those who responded sullenly sometimes contributed, unwittingly, to the perpetuation of the problem, because their response granted a special potency to the cuss, thereby providing the element of entertainment which encouraged future comment.

Most pupils were able to distinguish between acceptable nicknames, which utilised aspects of physical appearance, and

unacceptable cusses. Thus, for example, Barry a tiny Year 8 pupil, made the following observation when I asked him whether he got picked on because of his size:

> No, not really, I don't get picked on that much. People call me 'shorty' and that. They call me a nickname, they call me 'small', 'short', 'midget'. They call me that, but they don't cuss me.

Interestingly aspects of Barry's biography made it less likely both that he would be cussed and that he would interpret remarks as cusses. Brian was a regional karate champion (in a very light weight category) and was highly regarded by other children because of this achievement. He was therefore making a shrewd assessment of his own situation in claiming that other children did not cuss him.

Whilst children who were popular like Barry could feel confident that they were not cussed, the experience of those who felt much less secure about their status was very different. Barry himself pointed out that Alan, an extremely thin classmate, was the target of constant cussing. His elaboration of the cussing which Alan faced also provided an interesting glimpse of how helpless some children could be in the face of verbal abuse by physically more powerful, or verbally more skilful, peers:

> Cos some people cuss like Alan cos he's skinny (I'm not saying skinny).[4] And he don't like it, but he can't do nothing about it cos he knows he can't beat people up. So he knows he can't do nothing about it Alan.

Prior to beginning the research I had been Alan's form tutor and I was as a consequence familiar with one factor which contributed to

the perpetuation of his problem. When cussed, Alan invariably reacted dramatically; he would rapidly appear to be on the verge of tears and this reaction was undoubtedly greatly appreciated by some classmates. His problem was by no means confined to lessons, since school-day free time provided ample opportunities for unrestricted cussing. Thus, for example, Alan also faced cussing and teasing when playing table tennis with form mates during the lunch hour.

c) Differences between boys' and girls' cussing

Whilst many girls and boys on occasion cussed and teased and belittled other pupils in face to face interaction, it cannot be assumed that cussing took an identical form for both boys and girls. Amongst boys cussing had on the whole an undeceptive simplicity; thus boys would typically abuse one another making direct personal remarks about clothes or trainers. Then, if a confrontation developed, other more potent remarks (comments about mothers, for example) would be introduced in a mounting tide of aggression. Such exchanges would essentially be characterised by their directness: participants, or, all too often combatants, would rarely have room for doubt about what was actually said.

Cussing between girls tended to occur in rather more subtle ways and some of my clearest information about this problem emerged when girls jotted down the details of complex disputes. There were typically disputes in which a negative evaluation of one party would feature centrally. It would begin with broken secrets and the disclosure of information given in confidence - information, for example, evaluating an individual, their home circumstances, their prospects in relation to boys, or commenting directly about their looks. Jenny, one Year 8 pupil, explained in a written note why, from her point of view, there were difficulties with a former friend Chloe:

> Chloe has been saying things about Emma, Debbie, Laura, Poppy, Sally, Manisha, and Duke. I thought me Debbie and her were best friends and everything, but it turns out that she has been saying things about my house how it is disgusting and my kitchen painted brown to hide all the dirt (it is painted yellow actually). She says I would never be able to go out with boys. She says me and Debbie get on her nerves and are bitches. Emma has told us all these things and lately when she does come in its sometimes dirty looks and sitting on other tables.

It was, not surprisingly, immensely difficult to work through the maze of intrigue involved in quarrels of this type. Girls who appeared to be wronged in certain contexts could with dispiriting frequency re-appear as unhelpful participants or even stirrers in other disputes. Thus, for example, Jenny (the victim in the quarrel I have just cited) played a part in a later dispute when Shaistah, another classmate, was being ostracised. Shaistah provided details of this dispute in a written note.

> A little while back Emma and Manisha and I started to become friends as I was with Poppy, Sally, Laura and Toni. We also agreed to tell each other what people said about us. I told Emma that Jenny and Debbie once said things about her legs and tights and she said that Debbie and Jenny said things about me and other people have been saying things about me. Also Debbie and Jenny suddenly the other day decided not to speak to me. I still spoke to them but they didn't speak to me that much and when they did they spoke very abruptly.

Phone calls during evenings figured prominently in some of these quarrels. Sometimes school merely became the location for a second phase in disputes; it provided the arena for some unfortunate individual to be ostracised as a result of information exchanged by

girls when ringing one another up during the evening or when visiting one another at home.

It is clearly questionable whether it is legitimate to refer to phone calls in a chapter dealing with cussing. Equally, it is by no means obvious that data relating to the way in which some girls were ostracised by former friends should be included at this point. I have, however, included this material here because key features of cussing were present whenever girls offered evaluations of absent friends, since such interchanges (regardless of whether they took place over the phone or when a third party was present, for example, staying for a week-end) inevitably involved the belittling of the victim.[5] Furthermore, once back in school the victim could find herself to be the butt of altogether more obvious abuse. Thus Leonie became the target of unpleasantness from former friends, and during a phase when she was being ostracised in class, unpleasant abuse, including the phrase 'Leonie is a slag', was openly displayed on the schoolbag of an ex close friend. Leonie's problems persisted over a number of weeks and on one occasion, when she returned after a period of truancy, she provided, in a written comment, a few insights into the predicament of pupils unfortunate enough to be victimised or ostracised:

> Well if I've been off of school, I come back to a bad atmosphere, (i.e. = people being funny towards me, bringing back old news, and sometimes having been talked about (and I know I am just as two-faced about talking behind backs). And I don't like to grass on people, so I let things go on, and then it gets to this stage. Sometimes stories have been made up like - you said that so and so said -- when you haven't (or twisting stories to sound worse). Sometimes they try and turn others against me, or if I go with someone else 'its sniding off'.

If cussing amongst boys and girls tended to take different forms, what about cussing between boys and girls? As no doubt in all mixed secondary schools, there was a great deal of friendly and good natured teasing between boys and girls. Perhaps rather more unusually, the atmosphere at City School was sufficiently relaxed to enable boys and girls to be friendly without other pupils immediately assuming that their acquaintance was underpinned by amorous intent. For example, during the phase when she had fallen out with the 8E girls, Chloe hung around with Sean,a rather isolated classmate:

> Lately I have been hanging around with Sean because me and him get on well. At home things haven't been going too well and so in school I hang around with Sean because he makes me laugh.

In class,friendly flirtation could involve secret messages passed under desks in lessons or more obvious verbal interchanges.In 8SS one girl, Chanel, had gained a reputation as a troublemaker in the first half of the year because she was the main figure in a posse which tended to bully other girls in the year. During the second half of the school year Chanel became somewhat less interested, apparently, in actual physical aggression and in this more relaxed phase she devoted a great deal of her time in class to friendly verbal games which involved four Afro Caribbean classmates, Michael, Roy, Joel, and Emanuel. Her conservation on such occasions was invariably punctuated with references to 'rude boys' and to the Down Town Boys (the main gang of older youths in an important feeder area for the school) and her comments were greatly appreciated by the boys.

Sadly some aspects of male female interaction were altogether less playful. In many classes girls could be the target of cussing which

was highly derogatory or, on occasion, obscene. In 8J (and subsequently in 9J), for example, girls were constantly verbally abused by some male classmates. Over a two year period several girls from the form actually left the school and this verbal abuse was a major factor in the decisions of parents to transfer their daughters to single-sex schools. Leslie, one small girl in the group, was constantly the recipient of verbal abuse which likened her appearance to that of a horse, whilst Emma another girl in the group was frequently distressed by remarks which displayed an overclose interest in her physical development.

The problem of obscene, derogatory or suggestive cussing was by no means confined to 8J/9J pupils. Though girls were reluctant to discuss non humorous or serious sexist cussing when interviewed, incidental evidence of cussing of this type emerged in many contexts. Much of this cussing occurred in relatively subtle and linguistically sophisticated ways which prevented teacher recognition of the teasing. Thus, for example, mid-way through a lesson a boy might mutter, apparently randomly, a phrase such as 'Battersea Dogs' Home' (a hidden way of expressing the term bitch), whilst in apparent conservation with a girl.

The fact that unacceptable abuse tended to flow from boys to girls was firmly reflected in the balance of complaints which I received from pupils as Head of Year. Thus complaints were received not uncommonly from girls about derogatory teasing by boys, whereas complaints were virtually never received from boys about teasing by girls. Yet, interestingly, (and somewhat unexpectedly, given the frequency with which girls were verbally abused by boys) when making formal complaints girls tended to focus upon verbal abuse or unpleasantness stemming from other girls rather than abuse by boys.

Nonetheless, irrespective of whether the primary factor explaining why girls were more willing to complain about other girls was a reluctance to make complaints about boys to a male Head of Year; and regardless of whether girls were more distressed by the complex pattern of abuse and isolation associated with disputes with female classmates, there was overwhelming evidence that open verbal abuse in lessons, queues or the playground, primarily emanated from boys.

The boys' cussing was undoubtedly irritating, upsetting and demoralising. On one occasion, for example, a delegation of seven girls from 8LL arrived at my office bringing a written list of complaints about the quasi-playful cussing they faced from the boys in their class. Whilst all the girls disliked being cussed, their primary point of concern was the loss of learning time this caused. Their visit proved interesting in a number of respects. They provided fresh insights about how cussing could operate at a non verbal, physically symbolic, level - gestures which involved hand and mouth to tease a boy considered by his peers to have large, rabbit-like, teeth, for example. Their visit also showed that girls were increasingly determined to assert their right to an education free from the 'games' of less academically interested boys. Above all, these girls were firmly convinced that cussing was overwhelmingly a 'male' problem. This opinion also closely mirrored the responses of pupils when interviewed, since many interviewees implicitly assumed that most cussers were male.

d) Racialist Cussing

In many interviews I raised the question of whether there was a problem of racialist cussing. When I raised this issue, I was acutely conscious of my responsibilities as a teacher and I was especially concerned to ensure that my probing did not generate problems where no

previous difficulties existed. The strategy I employed to overcome this was to begin my question with a statement which implied that there was a general consensus amongst staff and pupils that race relations were excellent. Thus my probing would typically begin with a phrase such as 'most people think that race relations are very good at City School, what do you think?' It must be noted that this observation also matched very firmly my own conviction prior to beginning work upon the present research because the initial M.A. playground study (which focused upon activity patterns and space utilisation at playground level) had largely supported the view that there was little or no racialism within the school.

Sadly some interview responses suggested very firmly that the picture was less rosy than I had hoped. Thus, for example, the following conversation took place in the course of discussion with three Year 8 boys. Fahim, a South Asian pupil, reacted with great indignation when I suggested that there was no racialism in the school.

AS:	A lot of people say there is no racism at all. What do you think?
Fahim:	Well I think they are not true, sir, cos some people kid me and cuss me and call me Paki or whatever (agitated response)
AS:	Does that happen?
Fahim:	Yes
AS:	What sort of people do that, older people, younger people?
Fahim:	Younger, medium size (rapidly, as if starting a long list)
AS:	So lots of different types of people?
Fahim:	Yes
AS:	Is that a common thing or rare?

Fahim:	Common thing I think sir
AS:	Quite common?
Fahim:	Usually every day
AS:	What every day, every week?
Fahim:	Usually every day
AS:	And where does that happen? In lesson times or in the playgrounds or...
Fahim:	In lessons and in the playgrounds. Usually happens in the playgrounds.
AS:	And how might it happen in the playground?
Fahim:	Like if I'm playing better than anybody else they cuss me saying 'Paki' or whatever. Cos I'm better than them they think 'you're Paki there'.

Fahim's observations provide a powerful expression of an experience identified by a number of South Asian and African pupils. Moreover, as the research progressed very firm grounds for believing that Fahim's experience was by no means isolated emerged. As a Head of Year, for example, I had to deal with quarrels or fights which had begun with verbal (or gestural) abuse which implied that South Asian or African pupils were primitive, dirty and inferior. In later chapters references are made to formidable problems starting in this way. For example, in Chapter 9, reference is made to a fight involving an African pupil, which developed as a consequence of verbal abuse (remarks such as Bush and Jungle Girl) which implied that she was 'primitive'.

Words were not, of course, always required for a cuss to possess potent force. Thus in some teaching groups even the process of seat selection could be utilised to snub Asian children, since some white or Afro Caribbean pupils would, when required to sit next to a South Asian pupil, manoeuvre their seat away from their neighbour. This was

in order to imply to the class as a whole that their neighbour was dirty and smelt. Physical gestures could also be utilised to emphasise points of difference. Thus, for example, Ishmael (a Turkish pupil in Year 8) became demoralised and started to complain because he repeatedly faced Turkey gestures, which involved the flapping of arms, from classmates. Whilst it has to be conceded that abuse of this sort may begin with considerably less hostile intentions than open verbal abuse directed at South Asian pupils, it is not hard to see how abuse of this type becomes very annoying when used repeatedly.

Pupils from minority ethnic groups did not inevitably face cussing. It was clear, for example, that Afro Caribbean pupils were far less likely to be the recipients of racialist cussing than South Asian children. In a discussion which involved two Year 9 Afro Caribbean pupils, Ben and Steve, it was suggested that on extremely rare occasions racist verbal remarks such as 'you're as black as soot' were made. The boys stressed, however, that such remarks were exceptional and arose only when there was already an argument and it was really serious. Jacob, a Year 8 Afro Caribbean pupil, highlighted the difference in the treatment of South Asian and Afro Caribbean children, whilst also offering a suggestion about one possible factor (essentially a potential to make reactive use of physical force) which helped to explain why Afro Caribbean children were not cussed in this way.

Jacob:	They just get cussed by their colour and everything cos some people keep calling the Indians 'Pakis' and everything.
AS:	That happens does it sometimes? What about the West Indian boys Jacob. Does that happen? Do they get cussed?

Jacob: No they don't really get cussed.

AS: Why don't they get cussed?

Jacob: They'd get beaten up maybe.

Two important points can be made in relation to Jacob's observation. Firstly, his intimation that the ability successfully to employ a physical response could prevent the open expression of racist verbal abuse carried an interesting echo of Barry's observations about why his thin classmate had to put up with verbal abuse which focused upon his appearance. For in that instance, it was implied that Alan was not physically able to respond in a way that would deter cussing. Secondly, Jacob's response simply dealt with the open expression of hostility. Yet within the course of the discussion, it was in fact apparent that he did not doubt that there were pupils who were hostile towards Afro Caribbean children in the private world of their own thoughts.

Some interview responses housed interesting insights which related to pupil perceptions of the scale of the problem of racialist cussing. Whilst some pupils boldly claimed that there was no problem of racialist cussing, others claimed that there was little racialist cussing. The strong underlying tendency was, however, to suggest that racialist cussing was an insignificant problem compared with other forms of cussing - cussing of clothes, footwear, or mothers. The composition of the interview group did not affect this pattern of response. For example, four Year 9 boys, Josh, Michael, Don and Anwar (Josh and Michael Afro Caribbean, Don white and Anwar Asian) denied strongly that there was any racialist cussing, whilst readily acknowledging that sexist cussing was commonplace. This observation mirrored very closely my own experience as a Head of Year since far

more time was taken up with problems which began from cussing targeting appearance or mothers. One final point should be noted. No children subjected white or highly offensive children to derogatory group labels (for example, white honkies or coons). Yet frequently white children referred to South Asian children as 'Pakis' and even used this term when overtly expressing their distaste for racism!

e) Family Cussing

There was widespread agreement that a great deal of cussing was about families. It was also invariably admitted that pupils rarely knew the families about whom they were making such remarks. Steve's group pointed out how such cussing could develop in the context of minor quarrels.

AS:	Can you give me any examples of cussing?
Kamran:	Cussing someone's mum.
Carl:	Cussing your clothes; their family or whatever. Sometimes it might just be over a silly little argument about something stupid.
	And then it gets into cussing people's family.

Most pupils were surprisingly hazy about the content of this form of cussing. Some indirect cussing involved obscene remarks about mothers which pupils were reluctant to disclose. Frequently comments were made about the economic situation of families and such remarks were always about poverty not affluence. In many interviews I used the ploy of asserting that I did not think that there was a problem of cussing at City School. When pupils reeled off forms of cussing in response to this device, cussing about families featured prominently. This was evident, for example, in conversation with Year 7 pupils, Janet and Agatha.

AS:	Do you find girls, something that I don't think is a problem in this school, see what you think, there's no name calling is there? Nobody ever cusses anybody?
Janet:	They do (rapidly and forcefully)
Agatha:	They do
AS:	They do do they?
Both:	They do (emphasis and laughter)
AS:	What sort of
Agatha:	Especially the boys
Janet:	Like
AS:	What sort of
AS:	Lets have one at a time
Janet:	Your mum's dead and all that
Agatha:	Yeah (excited laugh)
AS:	So that sort of cussing goes on
Janet:	Yeah (excited laugh)
AS:	Can you give me any examples of other types of cussing?
Janet:	Your mum's (starts to giggle) (Agatha also starts to giggle)
Janet:	They are too rude. They've got a lot of swearing in them.

When quarrels involved remarks about families, there was a real danger that a situation would escalate rapidly into a high intensity fight. Thus, for example, Laura, a girl in Year 11, explained that a recent very serious fight between two Year 11 girls (one a fifth former, the other a sixth former) had started because they were cussing each other's mothers. Time after time such mother cussing was cited by children of all ages when trying to explain how or why they had become involved in high intensity fights and further reference to this

phenomenon therefore follows in Chapter 7.

The impact of cussing

Work in the role of Head of Year provided constant opportunities to assist children who were distressed because of cussing. Furthermore, when interviewing it became even more clear that cussing could cause a great deal of misery. As a subject teacher, prior to work upon the present study, I had noticed that Mavis, a shabbily dressed girl in 9X with severe learning difficulties, was the frequent target of unpleasant teasing from classmates and I learned that she had truanted because of this abuse. I interviewed her along with a classmate Harpreet and she claimed that she preferred lunchtime to lesson time because she was then able to go home. To my dismay, when I pressed Mavis about whether she faced more cussing in lessons or during free-time, Mavis claimed that cussing was at its worse when she was out of lessons but on the school site (for example, at times of movement between lessons or during morning break). Her response was disturbing because I was already well aware that she faced a great deal of abuse in class. Harpreet indicated the range of cussing Mavis faced:

> They mainly say stuff like if she has her hair in a different way they start cussing her about that; her jacket, her shoes saying, 'when's she going to have a wash?' And her shoes and everything.

When I tried to intimate to Mavis that the cussing she faced was 'just meant to be funny' she insisted firmly, with tears in her eyes, yet depressingly accurately, that it was 'nasty'.

Though cussing could have a potentially devastating effect upon children who were the constant target of abuse, it was abundantly clear that some pupils merely regarded cussing as a means of passing time and having a 'laff'. An interesting discussion which touched upon

this point developed when three Year 10 G.C.S.E. pupils were taking part in a research exercise which focused upon interviewing skills.

Aranta:	What kind of name calling do you hear around the school or what have you been called?
Khristie:	Or what have you called other people?
Komo:	Well some of us like our mates we used to like cuss a lot, you know, racist, sexist and things like that. But we never used to mean it you know.
AS:	Why say it then?
Komo:	Oh just to get people aggravated, you know, muck about, have play fights and things like that you know. But say if you say that to older kids, you know they get really serious, you know, and they wouldn't know that right. Especially if they didn't know them they'll get, you know, really mad and beat us up.

Yet it is arguable that even where merely playful to the cusser, cussing retains a capacity to channel pupils towards conventional patterns of behaviour, irrespective of whether cusses caused real distress or not. Thus Komo recounted his initial experiences of verbal abuse in Year 7:

Komo:	But I've been called, like as soon as I came to this school, I used to wear, I used to bring a brief case and a blazer and things like that and I used to get mashed up severely you know. Take the piss out of me and call me 'Larry the Lamb' and things like that and my little doctors bag' (laughter in voice). But it didn't bother me all that much you know.
AS:	But did you stop bringing your brief case?
Komo:	Yeah

For children who were not merely intent upon taking part in

classroom entertainment, the impact of cussing could involve far more than mere adjustments to items of clothings. Thus Justin, a statemented pupil, receiving in-class support for perceptual difficulties, who was permitted to use a typewriter in class, stressed that he found teasing in class very upsetting. Interestingly his experience was somewhat different from Mavis's, since he claimed that he rarely encountered any problems when not in lessons. One final vital point should also be made. Even where cussing began playfully, there was always a danger that unexpected tensions could develop. Thus, in the words of one third year, 'when someone can't take it' the fighting is likely to start.

Section Two

Commentary

In the course of fieldwork it rapidly became apparent that some of the forms of verbal abuse identified in other recent studies were in evidence at City School. Thus, as in the work of Cohn and Kelly (1989), cussing was seen to focus upon a range of factors (possessions, physical appearance, learning, ethnic or gender grouping) which related more or less closely to issues of personal identity. However, the mere identification of forms of cussing which parallel those identified in earlier studies tells us very little. A fuller appreciation of cussing implies a willingness to raise questions which direct attention towards a consideration of the flow of cussing and not merely the forms of verbal abuse in evidence. That is to say, it involves questioning who does the cussing and who is cussed and not merely what do cussers say.

But how useful is the term 'flow' in a study which uses qualitative data? The term can too easily be perceived to imply a degree of statistical certainty which may be inappropriate when, as here, no attempt was made to measure the 'real' amount of cussing. But the term flow in a more limited sense is useful if it conveys a sense of the broad patterns of abuse within the school, formed through both pupil responses to interviews and the balance of complaints received as Head of Year. Given this qualification, what then can be said about the flow of cussing at City School? And, what can we learn about power structures through identification of those groups or individuals who face most cussing?

Comments about clothes, physical appearance or personel qualities

Comments about clothes were of two broad types. Firstly, many

observations focused upon quality of apparel and implied that the cussee's clothes were substandard, 'hand-me-downs' or wildly out fashion. Secondly, some remarks were directed at the actual physical appearance of the cussee and highlighted ways in which the cussee's appearance departed from the norm.

Even for young (that is, Year 7 or Year 8) secondary pupils, fashion, or style, is of great significance; it is important therefore not to underestimate the potential effect of cussing which focuses upon dress or appearance. Reference to pupil concern about training shoes illustrates this point. Trainers played a highly significant role in pupil culture at City School, as elsewhere, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was in fact extremely difficult, if not impossible, for teaching staff to get pupils to wear shoes to match the official school uniform. Instead many pupils opted for prestige styles. Despite the fact that high status trainers were often extremely expensive, pupils would go to great lengths to secure footwear which possessed the correct 'street credibility'. Teasing related to footwear did not create the training shoe craze. Nevertheless, the weight of teasing which focused upon this aspect of dress had clear effects: it helped to generate a strong pressure towards conformity in dress style, whilst at the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, generating pressure in favour of breaking the standards of dress promoted by the school. Moreover, pupil enthusiasm for training shoes provided a specific locus for conflicts between parents and children, since many pupils would go to quite extraordinary lengths in order to secure desirable training shoes.

At its best the craze had some effects which were unconventional, but not especially harmful. For example, Emanuel, a boy in 8SS, had got at cross purposes with his mother and one focus for their quarrel

was her inability to afford to buy him new trainers. During one holiday, Emanuel worked for an uncle and thereby earnt the money to buy his own 'moonboots'. At its worse the craze had some quite damaging consequences. For instance,the pressure from children upon parents who were clearly unable to afford to buy trainers would be great, and this sometimes helped to foster longer term tension in specific parent child relationships. The contribution of cussing towards the general pressure which encouraged conformity to appropriately cool modes of dress should clearly not be underestimated, since in Gideon's memorable words when discussing trainers: ..'you really had to check it out if you didn't want to be laughed at'.

What then can be said about the flow of cussing which focused upon appearance? At one level it simply operated as a form of entertainment and on the surface at least it appeared that all pupils were open to essentially friendly, and often very funny, comments about dress. However,the crucial point is, arguably, that pupils were differentially placed in their ability to satisfy conventional standards in relation to fashion and as a consequence pupils were differentially subject to this teasing.

It could not, of course, be crudely claimed that it was only poor children who were subject to comments which focused upon dress. Some middle class children suffered the classical 'ear ole' fate: they attended school trainerless, in over-perfect uniform, thereby becoming the instant target for teasing by more wordly-wise classmates. Yet reference to the transitory discomfiture of a minority of middle class children should not distract attention from the key point. The children least equipped to escape attention from cussing were the poorest and most shabbily dressed and such children were undoubtedly

the prime targets of this abuse.

Cussing which targeted appearance was not the only form of name calling which flowed unevenly through the pupil population. Children with learning difficulties, clumsy children and children whose physical stature (whether diminuative or unusually large) departed from the norm could all have a reasonable expectation that they would be especially prone to teasing.

The experience and treatment of victims at City School highlights the perception of one of Goffman's insights in Stigma (1963). He demonstrates how the interaction between a deviant and the 'normal' population may be continuously distorted or skewed because it is framed around a central awareness of the purported point of difference. He also stresses the persistent problem of acceptance encountered by an individual perceived to possess a specific stigmata. Yet it is arguable that the process of cussing involves something which goes far beyond a mutual sense of awkwardness because of a perceived difference. When a victim is cussed, a 'difference' is activated by a verbal aggressor in a way which is liable to cause great distress to the vulnerable party.

Goffman demonstrates that a perceived stigmata may come to override other aspects of identity and it is arguable that the data lent support to this view. The fieldwork also highlighted a particularly painful aspect of the experience of children considered 'different'. Whilst the primary point of reference for the name calling of vulnerable pupils was the actual perceived point of difference between the stigmatised cussee and the rest of the pupil population, there was abundant evidence that once an individual was targeted, cussing would not necessarily be confined to the initial point of difference. For example, we saw that Alan's thinness was the

initial point of reference for the cussing he received; but he was also much more vulnerable than 'normal' children to comments which focused upon his general appearance. Similarly, having initially been teased because of her poor and shabby clothes, any attempt by Mavis to adapt her mode of dress to become rather more fashionable also failed to provide an escape route from victimisation and instead simply provided a fresh focus for cussing. This predicament was aptly conveyed by Harpreet:

> They mainly say stuff like if she has her hair in a different way, they start cussing her about that; her jacket, her clothes saying when's she going to have a wash and her shoes and everything.

It is important therefore to recognize, and convey, the full scale of the problem faced by the weakest children. A notion of primary and secondary cussing, is valuable as a device to convey the 'double burden' faced by children who possessed specific 'stigmata'. Chart A illustrates this point.

CHART A

VICTIMS	PRIMARY CUSSING FOCUS	POSSIBLE SECONDARY (EXAMPLES) FOCUSES
(i) Special Needs Pupil	Learning Difficulty	Clothes, Footwear, Participation in Activities
(ii) Thin Pupil	Physical Appearance	Clothes, Footwear, Participation in Activities
(iii) Fat Pupil	Physical Appearance	Clothes, Footwear, Participation in Activities
(iv) Poor Pupil	Shabby or unfashionable Clothes, Footwear	Alterations to Clothes, Footwear, Participation in Activities

Thus, in essence, the particular predicament faced by children who fall into a stigmatised category is that they do not merely have to cope with cussing about their 'problem'. For, in addition to abuse which focuses upon their point of vulnerability, they may have to come to terms with secondary, heightened, abuse which concentrates upon other aspects of their identity.

In the light of this pressure, the double burden faced by children falling into a stigmatised category should not be underestimated, and there is little wonder that a poor girl such as Mavis, with an understandable 'predisposition' towards truancy, should have regarded the teasing that she faced as 'serious'.

Boys and Girls

It was suggested above that there was a surprising lack of complaint about cross gender cussing. Though girls complained about boys, I more frequently received complaints about other girls. Boys invariably complained about other boys. However, at the interview stage it was apparent that when pupils explained that there was a lot of cussing in their forms, they tended to mean that the boys in their class cussed a lot. Thus, Janet and Agatha asserted that it was particularly the boys who cussed a lot. Why then did girls apparently complain less about cussing by boys? Was this because of embarassment? Or was it perhaps because teasing by boys caused little distress?

When attention is given to the types of remarks most likely to give offence, one possible explanation for this apparent reluctance becomes clear. Personal cussing (direct remarks which focused upon personal hygiene or suggestions about supposed sexual activity) forms the most obvious category of cross gender cussing likely to cause real distress and many girls may feel reluctant to disclose such

personal cussing to a male Head of Year. Yet I do not think t is is an adequate explanation of the low rate of complaint by girls about boys. The school's pastoral curriculum drew attention to the importance of tackling verbal abuse and all pupils were well aware that complaints would be listened to sympathetically. Furthermore girls were willing to make complaints to me when they were the victims of physical sexual harassment by boys. Possibly some girls did not complain because they do not find this teasing offensive. The offensiveness of a cuss might well in some contexts hinge upon the significance of the cusser as a point of reference and it is possible therefore that some girls did not make complaints simply because boys were not an important point of reference. In the early secondary years it is afterall not particularly surprising if it is remarks made by other pupils of the same gender which causes greatest pain, since pupils overwhelmingly opt to spend their spare time with friends of the same sex.

Two further points should also be mentioned briefly. Firstly, does some sexist cussing simply go over the head of the intended victim? In formal educational settings at least some abuse is communicated obliquely rather than openly and it is possible that this tends to reduce its offensive effect. Secondly, the fact that many girls had healthy grounds for scepticism about the power of teachers to tackle verbal abuse is also highly relevant. Some did not complain because they felt that complaint would have no noticeable effect.

What do we learn about cussing which involved both boys and girls by considering abuse amongst girls alone? Evidence emerged to suggest that a somewhat hybrid form of cussing (that is, remarks which a victim is purported to have said to a third party) was a common factor in many quarrels between girls. Rather paradoxically then it

was often silence (that is,communication through non communication) that was most obvious in quarrels between girls. Indeed such silence was sometimes the surface problem which led to staff intervention: girls would, at times, seek assistance in resolving disputes which had led to an unfortunate individual being excluded from a friendship group. Communication would of course be centrally involved in the construction of such conflicts, but typically it would be things said behind someone's back (e.g. remarks made following a visit to a friend's house at the week end or the disclosure of confidences) which would lead to arguments and not remarks said openly in face to face interaction.

In their own quarrels and disputes boys were only too ready to mock and tease one another face to face. Ironically however the phenomenon of talking behind someone's back may also help to explain the comparative lack of complaint by girls about boys. Possibly boys in the 11-14 year old age bracket primarily confined their most heavily derogatory musings about girls to the privacy of boys only conversational cliques?

Whitehead's 'Sexual Antagonism in Herefordshire' (1976) provides some fascinating clues about when cross gender teasing may be considered to be 'acceptable'. In her research, conversation between unattached males and females was frequently essentially flirtational in character. Irrespective of whether interaction was in work or a more informal setting, it tended to be heavily laden with friendly teasing and rarely involved the open articulation of obscenities. More outrageous (though not necessarily more hostile?) interaction was confined to those who were not potential sexual partners (for example, older men and young married women). Yet there was also an added edge to this joking relationship, for joking expresses, and maintains,

lines of social difference. It holds apart as well as indicating the existence of a boundary.

The cussing of girls in 8J/9J is very intriguing in relation to this point. In this instance the girls who complained were white. The boys about whom they complained were, apart from two exceptions (one white, one South Asian), all Afro Caribbean. The stronger element of verbal abuse undoubtedly present in the interaction of these children may in part have reflected the fact that, in the light of conventional social pressures, there may be little possibility of longer term friendships developing between these boys and girls. Yet at the same time it must also be acknowledged that it was more likely that prejudice may also have been very active in this context: it is possible that white girls may be more likely to complain, and to exaggerate, when teased in a normally flirtational manner by Afro Caribbean boys.

Reference to Whitehead's research also serves as a reminder that symmetrical or reciprocal teasing can be an important feature of male female interaction in certain contexts. A balanced consideration of cussing implies recognition that a great deal of the cussing in evidence was far from uni directional; whilst boys rarely, if ever, articulated complaints about cussing by girls in the school, it was apparent that many girls enjoyed teasing or flirting. It was noted, for example, that Chanel in 8SS played a cheerful and lively part in interchanges with Roy, Emanuel, Michael and Joel.

Amongst children of this age, of course, the potential for misunderstanding is never far below the surface and therefore a delegation of boys from 8LL arrived outside my office door one day when they heard that a group of girls in their class had already been to see me with a list of written complaints about the boys' cussing. As

Ishmael and Faiyaz, the two most articulate boys pointed out, the girls were being somewhat unfair - they were always cussing too! It is arguable that a balanced consideration of cussing which involves both boys and girls would appear to need to acknowledge the elements highlighted in Chart B

Chart B

Boys	⇒	FLIRTATIONAL	⇐	Girls	Routine, friendly teasing
Boys	⇒	DEROGATORY	⇐/	Girls	Primarily a feature of boys only conversational groups. Hence, 'non reciprocated' (Openly articulated where no structural possibility of longer term friendships?)
Boys	⇒	OBSCENE	⇐/	Girls	Primarily a feature of boys only conversational groups. (Openly articulated where no structural possibility of longer term friendships?)

Key

⇐ Denotes reciprocation

⇐/ Denotes non reciprocation

CHART B

Racialist Cussing

The discovery that certain pupils routinely faced racialist cussing as part of their daily experience of school life was one of the more disturbing, and surprising, features of the interview stage of the research. It will be recalled that racialist cussing could occur in a wide variety of ways; it could find expression through gestures or the manipulation of secondary objects (moving chairs). Above all, it

could find expression in conversation and teasing and name calling.

There were, moreover, few grounds for assuming complacently that this cussing caused little offence. Further, the expression of cusses through actions (such as the physical movement of a seat in class) has the power to transcend the linguistic barriers which divide ESL pupils from children already established in the school. Even a new pupil with little or no English could have few doubts about the character of their welcome from sectors of the City School population.

Where, as here, cussing finds expression through gesture, teachers can be misled and assume that little offence is caused. There is a temptation, for example, to assume that the Turkey gestures directed at Ishmael merely reflected friendly, companionable humour and that only the oversensitive child could take offence in such instances. Yet is is surely helpful to focus upon what victims actually think about cussing. After initially quite enjoying cussing, Ishmael, for example, gradually became more and more frustrated when Turkey gestures continued beyond the point when the more general problem of 'playful' cussing in 8LL had surfaced following the complaints of girls in the class. As a consequence, he visited my office on several occasions to express his continued, and growing, sense of frustration about the cussing of 'his country'.

The responses of informants when interviewed also showed that cussing could be distressing for victims. Whilst perceptive pupils like Jacob readily accepted that South Asian pupils were frequently, if not constantly, the target of cussing, not surprisingly some of the most powerful expressions of indignation about this cussing came from South Asian students themselves. The dialogue with Fahim for example, contained a firm expression of his conviction that there was a real problem of racialist cussing: an assertion that there was no racism

at City School met with a firm rebuttal: an enquiry about who did the cussing triggered the beginnings of a list (younger, medium sized etc): an enquiry about the frequency of cussing led to the firm assertion that it was an everyday occurrence and my enquiry about whether this happened in the playground or during lessons triggered a firm observation that it happened in both contexts.

How then was racialist cussing patterned? A number of pointers appeared to offer firm clues about the underlying flow of racialist verbal abuse. Form tutors often expressed a desire to discuss strategies to tackle problems of cussing within their form groups and when they highlighted problems of racialist cussing it was invariably pupils drawn from communities which were firmly minority communities in terms of the internal structure of the school (South Asian, African and South European pupils) who were deemed to be the main targets of this abuse. Pupil observations in the process of interviewing also overwhelmingly placed emphasis upon the way in which racialist verbal abuse was directed at South Asian youngsters. Furthermore, as Head of Year I was the direct recipient of complaints from children drawn from these minority communities. The division of power in the pupil social world was thus expressed in the identified pattern of racialist cussing. There was, furthermore, another important clue. In my role as a Head of Year, I never received complaints from white or Afro Caribbean pupils about racialist cussing. White and Afro Caribbean pupils often came to see me to complain about cussing, but their troubles invariably focused upon other categories of cussing - cussing about clothes, for example.

Whereas the failure of South Asian pupils to complain about cussing was a puzzle the failure of white or Afro Caribbean pupils to complain presented no such difficulties. The reality of school life

was that pupils from these two population groups were rarely, if ever, cussed in this way. Further, there was also no obvious interchange of racialist abuse between white and Afro Caribbean pupils . The children who cussed pupils from numerically small minority ethnic groups tended to be either white or Afro Caribbean. A uni directional pattern of racialist cussing characterised the school. Abuse flowed from ethnic groups with relatively large numbers of children in the school to groups with few pupils. Abuse did not, however, travel in the opposite direction. The position of African pupils requires special attention. Subtle forms of tension between Afro Caribbean and African pupils were reflected in verbal abuse. African pupils faced cussing which implied that their life style was primitive. Words such as 'bush' or 'jungle man' tended to feature in cussing directed at African pupils.

In Chart C the flow of verbal abuse from both white and Afro Caribbean pupils is highlighted.

Chart C

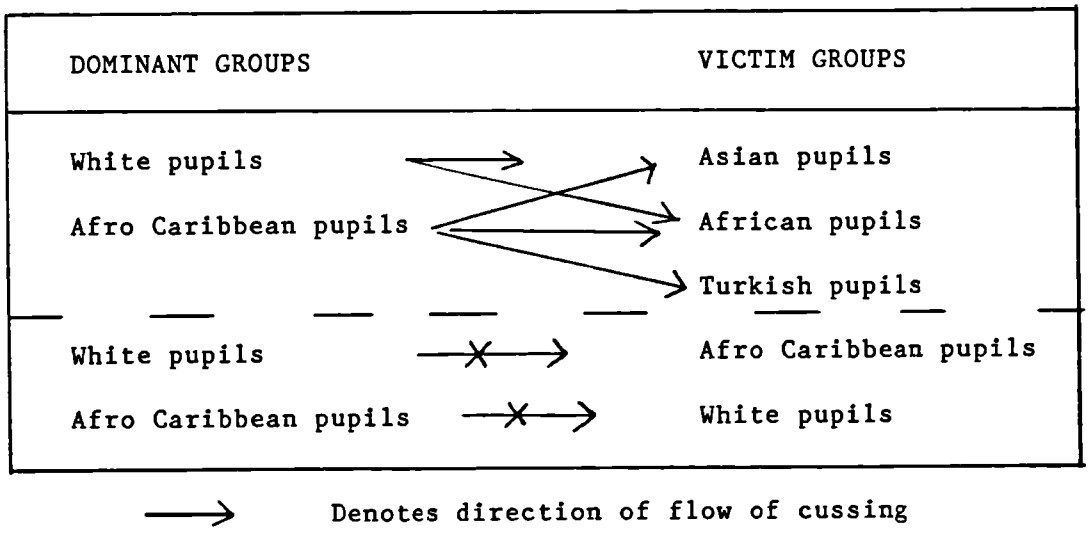


CHART C

One final important point should be noted. Life at City School was largely devoid of friendly racialist cussing which celebrated ethnic diversity through humour and worked out any underlying potential for racialism to flourish. The gesture related cussing of Ishmael in 8LL may have reflected a desire to do this, but it was clearly not accepted in this spirit.

Non problematic references to aspects of ethnic or cultural identity appeared to be confined to pupils from the same ethnic group. It was far from unusual, for example, for conversations between Afro Caribbean boys to begin with a remark such as 'what you don,doin you black boy?' It was perhaps precisely because such comments could be misinterpreted that such they were rarely, if ever, made between children from different ethnic groups.

Interpreting Cusses

I have emphasised that cussing can be highly distressing for cussees, and also that cussing was sometimes funny and enjoyed by both the cussee, the cusser and third parties. However, it was important for teachers and lunchtime supervisors watching dinner queues to be able to 'read' pupil interaction with reasonable accuracy. The difference between merely playful teasing and aggressive teasing liable to trigger a high intensity fight was rarely very obvious, but early intervention in 'serious' situations could at least make for a quieter lesson or for a more settled lunch break. Did the research provide any clues about how pupil interchanges should be 'read'?

It has already been stressed that pupils regarded mother cussing as the most serious form. Few, if any, pupils doubted its dramatic effect: mother cussing almost invariably triggered an escalation of a quarrel into an actual physical exchange of blows, a point which will receive further attention in Chapter 6. The potency of this offensive form of cuss may stem from the fact that it strikes to the heart of the

issue of identity. The term 'bastard' is after all even today a powerful term of abuse and the identity of mother is centrally intertwined in our culture with the identity of a child.

Whatever the merits of this wider speculation, for our present purposes it is sufficient simply to identify the fact that mother cussing was a uniquely potent form of abuse. A rather obvious but far from trite 'point' follows. A potent cuss is a cuss which children perceive to be serious. It may therefore be speculated that mother cussing was in effect a rather arbitrary possessor of this elevated status. An adequate explanation can arguably be provided simply through reference to the principle of the arbitrariness of the sign central to Saussarian linguistics.

There was neither humour nor uncertainty when the most potent form of mother cussing (a claim that a cussee's mother was dead) was used. In any large inner city school there is obviously no shortage of students without mothers and in both the age cohorts for which I was a Head of Year at City School there were children whose mothers had died in very tragic circumstances as a result of drug abuse. Some of the most complex disputes which I had to talk through with children in fact arose when one party had unwittingly stumbled upon, or had spitefully utilised, a uniquely powerful cuss by asserting 'your mum's dead' when quarreling with a pupil whose mother was, indeed, deceased.

What, if any, insights can be gained by examining how pupils react when teased? The contrasting way in which two pupils reacted to cusses which focused upon their physical appearance was noted in the data section. Barry displayed a cheery capacity to cope with remarks about his diminuative stature and was often able to turn these to his own advantage. In contrast, his classmate Alan lacked this facility and the suggestion was floated that his rather dramatic reaction

tended to trigger further teasing. Is an important factor therefore in determining whether or not a cuss is serious the actual reaction of the cussee?

However, whilst quite clearly pupils may well differ greatly in the ability to cope with personal cussing, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that situationally specific power relations may well play a part in shaping how cusses are interpreted. The presence of third parties is a factor of key significance in many situations in which teasing or cussing occurs. And in the presence of hostile children, sympathetic to the verbal aggressor, who giggle and laugh at (not with) the victim, it may be extremely difficult for the cussee to undermine the impact of a cuss by sharing in the joke or making an appropriate riposte. At this point therefore this section of reflection upon how cusses may be interpreted begins to return to our major theme.

In Chapter 3, I pointed out that an important aim within the present study is to tease out the power relations which inform, and are used by, pupils in aggressive interactions at City School. In this chapter I have noted that at City School a range of pupils - pupils whose size or physical appearance differs from the norm, pupils with special needs, and children with poor clothing - are especially vulnerable to abuse.

Foucault's concept of surveillance is apposite in understanding the experience of these isolated, weak and targeted children. The concept of surveillance is most obviously applicable in encapturing how social agents formally endowed with power (police officers, prison warders, hospital staff, teachers) can maintain control. Nonetheless,

this concept also sheds fresh light upon the cussing of vulnerable and isolated pupils. For undoubtedly many of the children who were cussed at City School were subjected to a constant and dispiriting process of threatening observation and comment. Further, this would create fear, confusion, uncertainty, embarrassment and misery.

The distinctive aspect of the experience of targeted children was the most vulnerable children was that they were not in a position to change the aspect of their identity which rendered them especially open to cutting comment. In this respect their experience differed fundamentally from that of more advantaged children who could make conformist adjustments in response to cussing. Thus, it was seen that the sharply observed cussing of Komo's sheepskin coat and briefcase led to his rapid re-appraisal of his preparations for school. Long term victims of cussing lacked this capacity to initiate personal changes which would offer an escape from surveillance and abuse.

In addition to focusing upon the experience of isolated children, I have considered the flow of abuse between the broad pupil groupings at City School. The unevenness of abuse between key groupings in the Lower School population is itself a significant pointer to the underlying power relations between broad pupil groupings which will receive close attention in chapters 8-10. Furthermore two important clues about the nature of power relations within the pupil social world emerged. Firstly, it was seen that there was a largely non reciprocated flow of verbal abuse from boys to girls. Secondly, it was seen that non reciprocated abuse flowed from both white and Afro Caribbean children to pupils from minority ethnic groups who formed a small overall share of the school population. Finally, it must be noted that this uni directional abuse, like the abuse of isolated children, confirms that it is important for teachers to recognise that cussing is sometimes a problematic and not merely playful aspect of school life.

Footnotes

Chapter 5

1. For example, Dubberley in 'Humour as resistance' shows how the 'tough love' style of one teacher, a style which involved jokes, was appreciated by pupils (1993, p. 85).

2. That is, the trouser legs were too short.

3. 'Bad' meaning good here.

4. Barry is explaining here that he personally did not cuss Alan in this way!

5. In Chapter 4 I drew attention to my desire to be open to the possibility that discrete phenomena may not always occur in the same way amongst boys and girls.

CHAPTER 6

FIGHTING

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first, data is presented and in the second a commentary upon the data is provided. Because remarkably little is known about fighting in schools, a key aim of the data section is to identify the scale of the fighting problem at City School. The section also considers what causes fights and explores whether there are significant variations in the involvement of boys and girls and children from different ethnic groups in fighting. At the same time, attention is also given to the fights which most obviously involve bullying - fights between children from different school years or age grades.

Because so little is known about fighting, I do not merely confine my attention within the commentary section to the power relations which inform patterns of fighting at City School. I also consider whether I was able to form a reliable impression of the scale of the fighting problem at City School and reflect upon both the causes of fighting and its impact upon school life.

Section One

Data

Real fighting - the term explained

In Chapter 2 I noted that the present study is primarily interested in 'real' or high intensity fights, rather than more playful fighting, and noted, in addition, that such fights have received surprisingly little attention in educational research. I intend to clarify my use of the terms 'real' or high intensity fights through reference to a number of specific incidents which I had to deal with in my work role as a Head of Year. It will be seen that my understanding of the notion of a 'high intensity' fight is based upon St. John Neil's deliniation of this phenomenon (1976).

One lunchtime, Biddy, a slight Year 8 pupil, called into my office and requested a class change. She claimed that far more of her friends were in another form, but in the course of conversation it became clear that there was another, more pressing, reason for her sudden desire to move. It emerged that Biddy was picked on by a much larger girl in her form and that in the course of a recent conversation Biddy had had her face slapped. This type of incident - involving a one directional flow of physical aggression, not an exchange of blows - is, arguably, best described as an attack not a fight.

A second sorry tale helps to deliniate the distinction more fully. One morning before the start of school Hardeep, a South Asian pupil, called into my office to complain that he had been attacked on his way home from school the previous evening. He claimed that a Year 7 Afro Caribbean pupil had approached him and had said, 'you're the boy who has been cussing me.' Whilst Hardeep had been demurring, an older pupil had approached and kicked him to the ground.

Corroboration of his tale was provided later in the day when his mother contacted school in order to find out what action was being taken. The point for our present purposes is that, as in Biddy's case, no exchange of blows was involved in this incident and therefore it cannot be described as a fight.

The distinction between play fighting and high intensity fighting is also a potential source of confusion. At secondary school level it is common for groups of boys to engage in forms of rough-and-tumble play which can easily be mistaken for serious fighting by the untrained eye. The most common form of this activity is simple play fighting in which two or more boys grapple without especially setting out to hurt one another. Play fighting may also be involved in larger playground games. Thus, for example, the game 'Boots' is popular from time to time. The purpose of the game (if the notion of purpose is not abused here!) is to catch members of the opposing team and to give them a vigorous kicking once isolated and trapped. Yet even in the most aggressive game of 'Boots' certain elements of high intensity fighting remain absent. Serious fights immediately attract highly visible crowds of pupils and, in addition, trigger prompt staff intervention, provided that staff are aware of their occurrence. In contrast staff tend to deal with outbreaks of 'booting' by preventing the activity; thus, an announcement might be made in assembly banning rough play from the playgrounds because of the risk of injury.

Having addressed the question of what fighting is not, we are now in a position to offer a working definition of high intensity fighting. Thus, a high intensity fight can be seen to be a fight in which individual pupils exchange blows with the intention of inflicting pain or injury until a victor emerges from the encounter. High intensity fights invariably attract crowds of pupils and arouse

immediate staff intervention if, or when, they are alerted. In contrast, low intensity fights, do not attract crowds. Moreover low intensity fights are perceived by pupils to be play, not 'real' fights.

The scale of the fighting problem

Over the years I had gained an impression that there were rather a lot of fights at City School. However, my M.A. study had not particularly supported this view: there were only two high intensity fights during the week of my observational study. Strong support for my initial impression was, nevertheless, provided when I interviewed pupils in greater depth and it became clear that many pupils felt that there was a lot of fighting. Thus, for example, four Year 8 boys, Robert, Paul, Adrian and Samuel, recalled that they were surprised by the amount of fighting when they started at secondary school and Adrian expanded:

> In our class, in 8EE, there was sort of like a fight every week. And we was all testing out who's the strongest, if you see what I mean. And it went on like that and it ended up with a certain person the strongest.

Some Year 7 pupils appeared to have arrived in senior school armed with a stoical acceptance of the fact that they were entering an institution in which fights were commonplace. For example, Shailaj and Danny suggested that fights frequently happened, but expressed no surprise at this. They expanded by offering the following comments in the course of a discussion of whether City School was rougher than their respective primary schools:

Shailaj: But then again you hear about lots of fights going on and maybe one or two

people having to go to hospital.

AS: Was that before you started in the school?

Shailaj: No it's happened since we've been here.

Danny: Yeah

Shailaj: We've actually seen it ourselves.

Danny was, nevertheless, insistent that secondary school was less rough than he had imagined it would be.

Their observations struck a chord with my own experience for, despite a background of teaching in Merseyside secondary schools, I retained a constant sense of surprise about the apparent frequency and ferocity of the worst high intensity fights. These fights were altogether different from the Opies' 1950s depiction of fights around which spectators would gather and make remarks such as, 'biff him on the boko!' (Opie and Opie, 1977, p. 216). In high intensity fights pupils would punch, tear, scratch and repeatedly kick opponents on the ground with a frenzy only to be rivalled by that of excited onlookers.

Because so little is actually known about high intensity fighting in schools it was important initially to learn about the scale of the fighting 'problem'. When I became Head of Year, I gained an ideal opportunity to monitor the number of fights which involved children from the years for which I had overall responsibility. I decided to monitor the number of fights brought to my attention during the three Autumn Terms in the main research period. I selected the Autumn Term for this additional research exercise because of the consistency in length of this term. Both the Spring or Summer Terms were more variable in length as a consequence of variations in the dates of the Easter Holidays.

As explained in Chapter 4, I had responsibility for two separate

age cohorts during the research period: Head of Year for Cohort A whilst in Years 8 and 9, Head of Year for Cohort B whilst in Year 8.

The reported figures include fights brought to my attention by teachers or lunch time supervisory staff, fights I broke up myself and, on a few occasions, fights stopped by community spirited pupils who then brought the combatants to my office to talk over the problem. Chart A records the number of fights in the three Autumn Terms.

CHART A

FIGHTS REPORTED TO HEAD OF YEAR (AUTUMN TERMS)		
COHORT A	YEAR 8	20
COHORT A	YEAR 9	13
COHORT B	YEAR 8	15

For a number of reasons it is probable that these figures underrepresented the number of fights which involved children from Cohorts A and B. In a large comprehensive school many members of staff may become involved in attempts to sort out high intensity conflicts. Some staff may shoulder this burden themselves; others may immediately refer pupils to whichever senior member of staff is conveniently located at the moment of difficulty. Information about these fights does not necessarily reach the relevant Head of Year.

The figures presented in Chart A merely record fights brought to my individual attention. Hence they do not indicate all the high intensity fights which involved children from Cohorts A and B in the research period and fights about which I gained incidental knowledge

are not included. For example, one day a fight between a Year 8 and a Year 11 pupil occurred at the Upper School and I learned about this incident quite by chance much later. The figures which emerged from the monitoring exercise therefore represent an imperfect gauge of the actual number of fights in the selected terms.

Fights may take place without any teaching staff knowing. For example, one afternoon I received a 'phone call from an angry mother who complained that her son had brought a classmate who had been hurt in a fight to her home and her 'phone call provided the school with its first information about this incident. Without her call the school would not necessarily have known about this fight.

Pupils may also fail to draw staff attention to fights if fights occur within the context of more general misbehaviour. An example like this arose when I learnt about the experiences of Chloe, an Indonesian girl in Year 8. I was concerned when I became aware that Chloe had truanted from lessons occasionally. In the course of discussion of the complex reasons for her truancy other problems came to light. For example, when absent from specific lessons Chloe had spent time in the Lavatory Blocks where she went for a smoke. Here older girls had demanded money from her and she had been involved in a fight. Not surprisingly, however, this fight was not reported because it occurred in the context of her own misbehaviour.

Consideration of when reported fights actually took place provides a further powerful reason for doubting that the figures accurately reflect the number of fights. The relevant information is detailed in Chart B.

CHART B

Time of Fights

Stage in the school day	Cohort A Year 8	Cohort A Year 9	Cohort B Year 8
Fights during registration	1	0	0
Fights in lessons	11	5	6
Fights during lunch or break time	5	8	6
Fights after school	3	0	3
	Cohort A Year 8	Cohort A Year 9	Cohort B Year 8

Lesson time fights featured prominently amongst fights referred for attention when Cohort A were in Year 8. Caution is, however, required here. There is a possibility that the presence, or arrival, of teachers who were obliged to intervene when these fights started may have distorted the figures. On such occasions teachers have a pressing need to remove combatants from the classroom to prevent further dislocation of lessons, and therefore pupils may be forwarded in the direction of the nearest available senior member of staff - hence making disproportionate numbers of these fights appear in the statistics. Another factor which may have reduced the proportion of lunch time or break time fights appearing in these figures was the fact that Deputy Headteachers, not Heads of Years, were the primary point of reference for lunch time supervisors, and therefore some fights may have been channelled in the direction of these senior members of staff.[1]

Gender, ethnicity and age grades

I have already stressed that the figures which emerged through monitoring reported fights did not accurately reflect the 'real' amount of high intensity fighting. Nevertheless these figures provide a valuable starting point for exploration of important themes: gender and fighting, fights between children from different ethnic groups and fights between pupils from different age grades.

a) Gender

In Chart C the numbers of reported fights which involved boys or girls were recorded.

CHART C

YEAR	NUMBER OF FIGHTS	BOY v BOY	BOY v GIRL	GIRL v GIRL
COHORT A YEAR 8	20	18	1	1
COHORT A YEAR 9	13	9	3	1
COHORT B YEAR 8	15	11	1	3
TOTAL	48	38	5	5

When Cohort A were in Year 8 only one of the twenty high intensity fights reported involved girls alone. Furthermore a similar pattern emerged in the Autumn Term following Cohort A's movement into Year 9; only one of the thirteen fights recorded involved girls alone. It might be claimed that such low figures actually say a great deal about the actions of teachers and show that teachers fail to regard girls' disputes as 'serious'. Yet there are obvious weaknesses to this

claim. The apparent tendency for males to be involved in physical aggression fits in consistently with what is already known about the 'social construction' of masculine identity. At City School, many boys constantly allocated a great deal of their free-time to the process of play fighting, whilst few girls acted in this way. The broad divergence in the reported rate of all-male all-female involvement in high intensity fighting also persisted when Cohort B were in Year 8, although it should be noted that the three encounters which exclusively involved girls (two of which involved girls drawn from a self styled 'posse') were amongst the most vicious fights of the term.

A fuller appreciation of differences in style emerges from consideration of encounters where boys and girls fought. Almost invariably on such occasions the male participant was 'in the wrong'. An interesting example in this respect was an encounter between several boys and girls in tutor groups 8J. The situation - better described as a series of scuffles rather than one specific fight - developed because girls in the class objected when they considered that the boys in the class were isolating and rejecting one small Asian boy.[2] One girl, Kim, detailed how the situation escalated:

> 'It all started when we was in Home Economics there was a little misunderstanding then in in Maths we was ignoring them because they were cussing us. He, Delroy, said to me "Who you looking at little fat girl?" But I ignored him. I was shaking a little. Then near the end of the lesson Earl started to argue with Tessa. Delroy hit Emma round the head. Then just left it and started to cry a little. Then Wayne hit Tessa and so she pushed him and he fell. Mr Grunt stopped him then we was dismissed and Wayne started to push Tessa. The boys were encouraging him. We started to walk down but Wayne was kicking Tessa down the stairs...

It is, of course, dangerous to generalise on the basis of a few examples. Undoubtedly, the motivation and attitude of girls involved in fights could vary greatly. The two Cohort A girls involved in a sudden fight following a dispute about a chair in registration were most sheepish about their actions; by contrast several of the Cohort B girls were altogether more defiant. Thus, for example, following one 'fight' (which would perhaps be better described as an attack) one Cohort B Year 8 pupil, Sharon, expressed no remorse and even refused to go through the motions of expressing regret by shaking hands and apologising to the girl whom she had attacked. Interestingly boys were almost invariably willing to play along with such rituals and genuinely appeared to hold no real malice once fights had 'cleared the air'.

b) 'Race'

At the beginning of this section it is important to acknowledge that it may be highly misleading to generalise on the basis of data gathered through a potentially prejudiced process. Just as some teachers may underplay the actual involvement of girls in high intensity fighting, so too there is a risk that some white staff may have a tendency to perceive encounters involving Afro Caribbean or South Asian students as 'serious' and therefore as worthy of referral, in contexts where encounters which involved white students would be downplayed. Therefore, unquantifiable 'prejudice' of this sort could play an important role in 'constructing' the available figures.

Further, because of the wide variation in the size of ethnic groups in the school population it could reasonably be expected that white or Afro Caribbean pupils would figure much more prominently in the reported figures than children from other ethnic groups. Equally it could reasonably be expected that fights which exclusively involved pupils drawn from small ethnic minority communities (for example, the

Turkish community) would be rare.

Yet, in spite of these observations, the figures seem to house some alarming trends. Thus, although there were no fights between South Asian children during the three Autumn Terms (a reasonable expectation given the relatively small size of this community), South Asian pupils featured disproportionately prominently in encounters with white or Afro Caribbean pupils. For example, when Cohort A were in Year 8 five fights between white and South Asian pupils and four fights between South Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils were referred for my attention. Two years later, when Cohort B were in Year 8, there were no referrals which followed fights between white and South Asian pupils, but there were four referrals following fights between South Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils. The figures which relate to the three Autumn Terms are set out in Chart D below:

CHART D

	COHORT A		COHORT B
	Year 8	Year 9	Year 8
White v White	3	1	1
White v South Asian	5	1	-
White v Afro Caribbean	1	-	2
White v Turkish	1	-	1
Afro Caribbean v Afro Caribbean	4	6	7
Afro Caribbean v South Asian	4	2	4
Afro Caribbean v African	1	1	-
Afro Caribbean v Turkish	-	1	-
South Asian v South Asian	-	-	-
South Asian v Turkish	-	1	-
Turkish v Turkish	1	-	-
TOTAL	20	13	15

The possibility that the comparative frequency of fights between South Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils and South Asian and white pupils reflected poor race relations is explored in Chapter 9. Consideration is also given to the possible reasons why there were apparently, few fights between Afro Caribbean and white pupils. This was, arguably, very surprising , given that white and Afro Caribbean pupils constituted over 80% of the pupil roll of Cohorts A and B.

c) Age Grades

Reported fights primarily involved pupils drawn from the same year. It was not, however, clear how closely this mirrored the actual pattern of fighting since fights between pupils from different years were especially likely to be reported to other members of staff. For example, a fight between a Year 8 pupil and a Year 9 student might well be reported to either relevant Head of Year or a Deputy Headteacher. Nevertheless the available evidence appeared to suggest, perhaps unsurprisingly, that pupils primarily fought with other pupils in the same year. The figures are presented in Chart E.

CHART E

COHORT A YEAR 8 18 fights between Year 8 pupils 2 fights between Year 8 pupils and pupils from other years
COHORT A YEAR 9 8 fights between Year 9 pupils 5 fights between Year 9 pupils and pupils from other years
COHORT B YEAR 8 11 fights between Year 8 pupils 4 fights between Year 8 pupils and pupils from other years

b) What caused fights?

> ...'later on I was looking at him because he was holding the ball and he put his two fingers up at me. So I did it back and he started to get angry cussing my mum calling her an ugly bitch and calling her Margret Thatcher. So I said, "your mum's a pig" and he slapped me round the head. So I told him to, "get lost" and he carried on so I grabbed him round the neck to try and stop him and he hit me in the ear. So I got angry and hit him in the eye and then Rod and Dell started on me punching and kicking me and saying that they're going to jump me at the end of school'...

Year 8 boy describing a quarrel following a collision during a game of football in P.E. lesson!

It was suggested above that cussing was often either a cause, or more accurately, a trigger mechanism when fights occurred. In some situations when a quarrel had developed - perhaps because of a collision or an argument over a chair - cussing would increase the tension to the point at which blows were exchanged. The recorded cases lent support to this argument. In more than half the fights cussing, or rumours about cussing, were important contributory factors.

In one instance a Year 9 boy attacked a boy from Year 8 because of remarks made about the short hair-cut of a younger friend in Year 7. Two boys fought in a Mathematics lesson because the first had been calling the second 'four eyes' and the second had responded by calling the initiator of the insults a 'big fat bastard'.

Some of the most serious fights involved remarks, or reputed remarks, about mothers. One lunchtime as a Year 8 pupil waited outside my office, two other Year 8 pupils walked past, down the corridor. Brendan, the smaller of the two, remarked to Ian,his stocky

and volatile friend, that the boy outside the room was the one who had been cussing his mother. Upon receipt of this information, Ian launched into a vicious attack and a serious fight developed. As a result of the encounter, Jess (the boy waiting), required medical attention. The information provided by Brendan, was, needless to say, fictional.

Cussing could also trigger fights between boys and girls. One Year 8 girl, Sharma, was very sensitive about the tragic death of her natural mother; she was, in addition, very unhappy living with foster parents. One morning Sharma had been given the job of showing prospective new pupils and their parents around the school. Whilst she was carrying out this task, a classmate approached her and told her that a boy in her class was cussing her saying things like: 'how do you like living with your new mother?' After completing her task, Sharma assembled with her form ready for the next lesson. She waited for the arrival of Len, the boy who had been making the remarks, and, in a flood of tears, attacked him. Staff intervention was required to break up the ensuing fight.

Pupils had excellent memories where cussing was concerned. At any point in time long forgotten insults could be recalled and trouble could rapidly follow. Thus, for example, Arthur a white, plump and very odd boy in Year 7, faced difficulties shortly after starting at City School because he quickly discovered that two older Afro Caribbean boys to whom he had previously made racist remarks (such as 'go back in the tree') on his way to Primrose Junior School were now his seniors in school.[3] As a consequence a fight followed on a local housing estate one week-end.

Cussing was not a factor in all fights however. Fights involving Cohort A pupils in Year 8 illustrate this point well. One fight

happened simply because it was felt that a new boy was showing off in class; on another occasion, as mentioned above, two Year 8 girls fought in registration because of a quarrel over who had claimed a chair! No name calling at all was involved in one of the most serious incidents whilst Cohort A were in Year 8. For a number of weeks tension developed between Afro Caribbean and South Asian children both at Primrose Junior School, a nearby primary school, and on a local housing estate. Many older siblings of children at Primrose School attended City School. One morning South Asian boys from City School were attacked with stones as they dropped off their little brothers and sisters at school. The next morning a rumour spread that Sandeep, a South Asian pupil who had gained a reputation as a fighter, had brought a knife into school. As a consequence of this rumour, which turned out to be false, Sandeep was attacked by four boys (two Afro Caribbean, two white) at the end of morning break and a very nasty fight followed. Whilst this incident is, perhaps, better described as an 'assault' rather than a fight, it illustrates the underlying point that cussing was not the only cause of fights.

During the course of fieldwork I became increasingly aware that many pupils in the school were deeply concerned about the verbal and visible qualities of their face to face interaction with peers. Two related processes - 'blanking' and 'screwing' - could in fact function as trigger mechanisms, generating fights in much the same way as cussing. A claim that someone was screwing (that is, giving you a 'bad look')[4] was regarded by pupils as a legitimate reason to start a fight. Similarly a claim that someone was 'blanking' (that is, not responding appropriately in conversation) enjoyed the same status.

A further feature of school life was a potential source of conflict. At City School there were constant changes to the pupil

roll. Even though the actual rate of mobility was lower than in many inner city schools, there were actually 47 changes to the pupil roll of Cohort A whilst passing through Years 8 and 9. Not unnaturally this constant pattern of change tended to unsettle some children and it was by no means unusual for new pupils to become involved in high intensity fights.

One final point should also perhaps be noted. Fighting had an immensely disruptive impact upon school life. Furthermore, even when fights happened after school the relationship between the school and the local community could be damaged. After school one day, for example, two Year 7 girls fought in the playground and, unfortunately, because of pupil obstruction, staff were unable to identify the girls in question. As a result a group of 100 or more pupils spirited the girls away to the grounds of a nearby block of flats where the fight continued. Fights during the school-day were, of course, equally, if not more, disruptive and a strong sense of this disruptive force emerged in conversation with two Year 7 girls, Dianne and Meryl, in the process of discussing whether fights tended to start during lessons or playtime:

Dianne:	It's mostly lunchtime and playtime they start fighting.
AS:	It mainly starts then does it?
Meryl:	It mainly happens in lessons cos last week we had one in English. A fight with this boy and this girl and they started fighting but I don't know how it started.
Dianne:	And then this other, one person, gets up and goes, 'there's a fight there's a fight' and the whole of the first years (excited voice)...
Meryl:	Right from the other classroom cos in room 27 we have 1H, in the other classroom opposite us and one of the boys and girls they go up to the classroom and they goes, 'there's a fight' and everybody comes

crowding round and they start shouting and the teachers come.

Dianne: And when the fights ended and we're all in one lesson one boy comes and goes, 'Oh that boy beat you.' He go, 'that boy beat you in the fight.'

An appreciation of the disruptive potential of fighting, regardless of whether fights were in the playgrounds in 'play-time' or in classrooms during the lessons, was arguably the most important legacy of the process of fieldwork. For whilst great caution is needed in relation to the statistics relating to high intensity fights, no caution is required in assessing the central impact of fighting. Real fights excited, distressed, scared and entertained children and at the same time seriously undermined the school's capacity to provide students with adequately focused learning opportunities.

Section Two

Commentary

Whilst the zest with which some pupils fought was not always immediately obvious in the examples of fights cited in this chapter, some factors hinted at the glee experienced by those who were cast simply in the role of spectator. This was implicit, for example, in the readiness with which two Year 7 girls were eased away from the playgrounds to the sanctuary of a block of flats in order to be able to continue their fight without staff intervention. It was also implicit in Dianne's excited evocation of the remarks used when fights erupted, 'there's a fight, there's a fight'.

Not least amongst the pleasures which fights offered, was the opportunity to feel detached from the normal constraints operating in school. Fights during lessons were, arguably, particularly attractive in this respect. They offered an ideal opportunity to break free, for the duration of the fight, from the normal teacher-led framework of classroom rules; desks might therefore be scattered and chairs upturned as pupils surged on mass towards the struggling combatants. When fights erupted there was indeed a strong possibility that teaching or support staff would be placed in situations which offered real physical discomfort. Thus, from time to time dinner ladies would be jostled or further inconvenienced whilst forcing their way through rapidly forming crowds in order to separate fighters. During fights some pupils really 'blew it'; and when pupils were beside themselves with anger there was always a possibility that a member of staff might catch a flailing blow.[5]

To suggest that all, or even most, pupils actually enjoyed watching fights would, of course, be misleading. Indeed after fights some combatants would themselves be highly distressed and genuinely

amazed or disturbed by what they had just done. When fights occurred pupils who reacted with great delight inevitably tended to figure very prominently. It could not, however, be readily assumed that the mass of students experienced precisely these emotions. Undoubtedly, however, the drama of playground fights was greatly enjoyed by many pupils. At the first signs of a high intensity fight whole crowds of pupils would surge excitedly across the playgrounds to form a circle around the fighters. Moreover the frequency of these incidents in this inner city school did not appear to dampen pupil enthusiasm.

At City School physical toughness and fighting prowess were common conversational pre-occupations for many boys. Given this climate, there were, not surprisingly, constant rumours about anticipated fights. Whilst such rumours were not directly examined, it should nevertheless be noted that rumours were undoubtedly a disruptive force in the life of the school. Rumours could cause great excitement and unrest and half hidden interchanges about anticipated fights at the end of the day could greatly distract and unsettle pupils during afternoon lessons.

Is it possible that the data section overplays the concept of a clear, analytically distinct, high intensity fight? The employment of this notion of 'real' fighting (different from other aggressive encounters, hassling bullying and attacking) tends to generate an ordered, carefully categorised, portrayal of school life. Yet many pupils or teachers might doubt whether school life is actually at playground level so neat. It is furthermore interesting that one or two of the cases cited relating to girls represent very marginal cases in terms of the original definition. Thus, although the exchange which involved boys and girls in 8J is included within the overall figure, it is questionable whether this incident should feature in this chapter or whether this should be reserved for Chapter 8

(Gender). Similarly, the 'exchange' which centred upon Sharon actually involved an encounter with another girl as she desperately tried to escape by getting into a car driven by a friend's mother. This incident had therefore many of the hallmarks of an assault. In part the inclusion of these incidents here reflected a desire to inject into the operational definition of fighting a sufficient degree of flexibility to accommodate the possibility that fights involving girls might not always take exactly the same form as encounters between boys.

Even allowing for such examples, however, it has to be stressed that the process of analysing fights at City School is primarily a process of analysing a male phenomenon. It would therefore be dangerous to assume that the observations of the study about fights in this context are of immediate relevance to an examination of fights between girls elsewhere.

The desire to learn about the scale of the high intensity fighting problem was emphasised in the data section. Alongside the presentation of figures which related to the reporting of fights, stress was placed upon the various constructive processes which underpinned the accumulation of these figures and attention was drawn to the alarming fact that the reported figures almost certainly grossly underestimated the actual number of high intensity fights. Zelditch's comment about the role of the solitary observer in 'Some methodological problems of field study' is arguably especially pertinent here: he notes that it is impossible for a participant observer to be everywhere and that therefore,... 'something happens that he has not seen, cannot see or will not see' (1978, p. 130).

Amongst the factors which contributed to the very solid grounds for claiming that the actual figures of reported fights underrepresented the actual number of high intensity fights which involved pupils from Cohort A and Cohort B were: the reporting of

fights to Deputy Headteachers (and especially, perhaps, the chanelling of information about lunchtime fights in this direction by Lunchbreak Supervisors); the handling of fights which involved Cohorts A and B pupils and children from other school years by other Heads of Year; the resolution of fights by other members of staff; my absence from the Lower School during certain lessons when I taught G.C.S.E. and 'A' level classes at the Upper School and the fact that some fights happened without any adults knowing (a factor, perhaps, of especial relevance to fights at the end of the school-day).

Besides fights which involved children from Cohorts A and B, there were, of course, many fights between children from other age grades. It is only through recognition of this much broader picture (which is not reflected in the statistics) that a fuller appreciation of the disruptive potential of fighting upon the quality of life for all pupils in school can be gained. Yet even though reported figures clearly underrepresented the 'real' number of high intensity fights, some important observations can be made with confidence. For example, it was abundantly clear that fights between boys were far more common than fights between girls; equally it was clear that pupils were more likely to fight with others from the same school year rather than with older or younger children. Moreover, the fact that the details were recorded for three years also provides grounds for belief in the underlying accuracy of information about a further worrying aspect of school life. Throughout the three years no fights between South Asian children were recorded: yet within the same time period 16 fights involving South Asian and white or Afro Caribbean pupils were reported.

Gender

When bullying is examined in Chapter 7, it will become clear that

there were girls with a well established reputation for toughness. Yet whilst it cannot be simplistically suggested that fighting was an alien experience for all girls, (there were girls who took great pride in their fighting prowess) the great majority of girls remained stubbornly uninterested in testing out their facility in this area. It was seen that only five of the 48 reported fights exclusively involved girls! No doubt there were also boys who disliked fighting. However, for many an interest in fighting was simply the most intense expression of a more generalised interest in physical aggression. We have already seen that play fighting was an important leisure activity for many boys, but not girls, in the Lower School. The research did not explore whether the boys who became involved in 'real' fights were also boys who enjoyed this 'relaxational' play fighting, though it is arguable that further information about this point would have proved helpful in assessing the extent to which real fighting caused genuine distress for participants.

'Race'

Particular attention was drawn to the disturbing number of fights between South Asian and white or Afro Caribbean pupils. When Cohort A were in Year 8 there were no fights involving South Asian pupils alone. Yet nine out of the twenty fights recorded were fights between South Asian and white or Afro Caribbean pupils (four fights with Afro Caribbean pupils, five fights with white pupils). This was one of the most surprising and worrying findings emerging in the research and it conflicted with the favourable impression of race relations formed in the M.A. study. It is of course possible that the first term when Cohort A were in Year 8 was a freak term. Some support for this view can perhaps be found by focusing upon the experience of Cohort A during their first term in Year 9; only three fights between South

Asian and white or Afro Caribbean children were reported, although interestingly, it must be noted that there were once again no fights simply involving South Asian pupils. It is important to recognise that there is no suggestion here that pupils from South Asian families never fight. My own subsequent work in a middle school where over 90% of pupils were of South Asian family background showed that this was not the case. Instead the point is that a figure showing that nine out of twenty reported fights in a term involved South Asian and white or Afro Caribbean pupils was high given that only 10% of pupils were of South Asian family background. Further, this figure is disturbing when it is fully appreciated that South Asian pupils were clearly not the primary aggressors in many of these instances.

The possibility of subtle forms of prejudice resulting in distortions in teacher reporting of high intensity fights was recognised in the data section. It was suggested that some white teachers may refer fights which involve South Asian or Afro Caribbean pupils in circumstances where similar fights between white pupils would be downplayed. Yet, without even allowing for this very real possibility, only seventeen of the forty eight recorded fights involved Afro Caribbean pupils alone - a far from surprising figure given that broadly 30% of pupils in Cohorts A and B were Afro Caribbean. A stronger case for belief in either differential patterns of teacher reporting, or disproportionate involvement of Afro Caribbean pupils in high intensity fighting, could be made by considering the total figures for the three years for at least one Afro Caribbean pupil was involved in thirty three out of the forty eight reported fights.

Consideration of the thorny issue of how prejudice might encroach even in the accumulation of statistical information reveals why, in this

study's exploratory examination of high intensity fighting, no attempt has been made to attach formal statistical significance to the figures relating to the Autumn Terms. When placed alongside recognition of the other obvious constructive processes which underpinned the figures, the case for caution is clearly paramount.

With some reluctance, however, a further observation relating to the involvement of Afro Caribbean pupils in high intensity fighting should be made. At City School the fights which were least susceptible to formal monitoring were fights at the end of the day since pupils could simply clear off the school site into adjoining roads or onto the neighbouring housing estates in the event of staff intervention. With the benefit of long term involvement in the life of the Lower School, two comments about these after school fights can be made with considerable confidence. Firstly, many of these fights related to quarrels between Afro Caribbean students and secondly it was overwhelmingly in fights between Afro Caribbean pupils that status accruing from pupil recognition for toughness and fighting competence was achieved.

Age

What evidence emerged in the study about the relationship between fighting and age? Overwhelmingly it appeared that students tended to fight with other children of broadly similar age: with pupils, that is, from within the same or adjoining age grades. The strongest expression of this tendency occurred when Cohort A were in Year 8: only two of the twenty reported high intensity fights involved children from other years in the school. However, this tendency was much more weakly expressed when the children in Cohort A were a year older: five of the thirteen high intensity fights in this term were with children from other age grades in the school.

Is it possible that this draws attention to an important point? It cannot be assumed that a consistent relationship between fighting and age emerges irrespective of the age grade under consideration. Is it possible that some of the major factors causing or triggering fights may change as pupils mature? It may, for example, be suspected that quarrels about boy girl relationships may feature rather more commonly in the fights of older pupils.

Exploration of another very important point was outside the scope of the study. The research did not produce evidence to show whether the phenomenon of high intensity fighting declined as pupils moved through the age grades in school. In the light of variable factors (such as, for example, the more sophisticated capacity of older students to conceal high intensity fights from teachers?) it would undoubtedly be dangerous to read too much into the reduction in fights involving pupils reported fights involving children from Cohort A when in Year 9.

The additional factor leading to possible unreliability in the figures relating to fighting and age was stressed in the date. It was seen that fights between children of different ages were especially likely to be dealt with by the Deputy Headteachers or by the other relevant Head of Year, increasing the possibility of an especially pronounced underrepresentation of these fights. However, it must be conceded that the fact that fights between children from different age grades occur comparatively rarely is also not especially surprising. Children from the same age grades tend to spend far more time together both in and outside the classroom and this inevitably throws up opportunities for conflict as well as for companionship.

What caused fights?

It became increasingly clear that anything which caused a quarrel could also cause a fight. Thus, for example, arguments about positions in queues, disputes in classrooms about who was first to a chair, quarrels in playgrounds about the rules of games, could all result in fights. Almost inevitably verbal exchanges would feature in the build up to fights and it is arguable that on such occasions cussing acted as a trigger mechanism which precipitated the actual exchange of blows.

Attention has already been given to the phenomenon of cussing and at this point it is sufficient to stress once again that cusses varied in their potency and that all pupils were aware of the potential effect of utilising a powerful cuss such as a remark made at the expense of a cussee's mother. A key element of this process was, that pupils considered that cusses gave them licence to step free from the constraints of normal school regulations. Within the pupil social world it was, in effect, perceived to be okay to 'go crazy' or 'flip it' when mothers were verbally abused.

However, consideration of the impact of rumours, arguably, highlights the 'game' element underpinning some 'real' fights. Thus in some circumstances non verified rumours that a pupil had been saying something about a pupil's mother could result in a fight, without any attempt to verify the accuracy of the account of verbal abuse.

We have already seen that towards the end of the research period it became clear that many pupils were also concerned about the quality of their face to face interaction and a number of fights in the later stages of the research arose because pupils took offence either at the way others were looking at them or because of a failure to respond

adequately in conversation. A frustrating feature of the research was that it was by no means clear to what extent the phenomenon of 'screwing' and 'blanking' had been a feature of pupils' culture throughout the research period. Undoubtedly it is highly probable that a sensitivity to 'blanking' and 'screwing' had always been a feature of pupils' culture and that I had simply missed this point because pupils' quarrels primarily centred upon cussing. There is, however, another intriguing possibility.

Cussing operated as a pretext for fighting. Thus, some pupils may not really have been offended by cussing, yet it provided, nonetheless, a ready excuse for a 'punch up'. Throughout the research period the school was giving increasing attention to the problem of cussing in the pastoral programme. Is it possible therefore that one consequence of this was that some pupils creatively explored other pretexts for fighting? It must, furthermore, be acknowledged that it would be misleading to assume that all 'trigger mechanisms' remained constant in potency through time, or indeed that pupils from every age cohort in the school tended to fight for exactly the same reasons. When Cohort A were in Year 9 they still primarily fought because of cussing, whereas quarrels about relationships was apparently a primary cause of fights when another cohort of pupils were in the third year during the research period.

There is a danger that because I have emphasised the facets of pupil interaction which may trigger fights sight may be lost of the role institutions may play in creating the circumstances for fights to occur. It is therefore interesting, and important, to note that immediately prior to the beginning of the research the number of tutor groups in Cohort A was reduced from seven to six. This change had potentially negative consequences in terms of pupil social relations. The six remaining tutor groups gained an additional four of five

pupils, thereby undermining the sense of group cohesion developed in Year 7. This may in part explain why there were seven fewer fights at the end of Cohort A's time in Year 9 when the classes had had a longer time to re-establish a sense of group cohesion.

The relationship between power and the avoidance, or occurrence, of fights

Bulmer in 'Introduction: Problems, Theories and Methods in Sociology (How) Do They Interrelate?', his introductory article in Sociological Research Methods. An Introduction (1977), places stress upon the difference between sociographic and sociological inquiry and claims that sociological exploration goes beyond purely descriptive or logging exercises because it seeks to understand and explain social phenomenon.

The final part of this chapter tries to be faithful to this insight and seeks to explore in a rather more ambitious way the power relations expressed within patterns of fighting at City School. It seeks to explore why in some circumstances, but not others, trigger mechanisms cause fights and to understand apparent variations in the involvement of boys and girls and children from different ethnic groups in fighting. The section also considers whether it is appropriate for children of different ages to fight.

Wiseman, in 'The Research Web' (1978) argues that in qualitative research the process of data gathering and analysis is likely to be intertwined. In this study it must be stressed that,whilst data which relates to different aspects of pupil social life is presented in separate chapters, information which relates to each discrete area was accumulated at the same time. Hence there are inevitably close connections between all the sections of chapters which comment upon data. Of necessity, the present chapter's examination of the power

relations expressed within patterns of fighting anticipates the fuller exploration of the power relations embedded in the interactions of girls and boys, children from different ethnic groups and children of different ages provided in chapters 8 to 10.

Attention to the problem of when fights happen or are avoided requires the use of three concepts - a concept of 'power differential'; a concept of 'defence strategy' and a concept of 'fight appropriacy'. I shall begin by clarifying the meaning of these three terms. The concept of 'power differential' draws attention to the fact that in some quarrels an advantaged combatant possesses greater power. This power is not merely perceived to be physical power, the power with the most obvious surface relevance to fights. Instead it is intended to accommodate the possibility that when pupils of different status within the pupil social world quarrel one party may enjoy certain advantages or 'resources'. Resources might be both practical and psychological, for example the ability to mobilise older siblings or members of a particular ethnic group to be present 'in support'. Alternatively resources might be purely psychological (for example, the ability to benefit from an underlying perception that boys are tougher than girls). By focusing attention upon a potential range of resources, the concept of 'power differential' therefore allows room for the ironic possibility that in some circumstances even a physically weaker combatant, or potential combatant, might enjoy overriding advantages rooted in social power.

The concepts of 'defence strategy' and 'fight appropriacy' are intended to cast light upon whether in the event of a quarrel developing pupils will actually fight. The core concern of the concept of 'defence strategy' is with the options available to, and taken by, children in disputes with pupils enjoying greater power resources.

The concept of 'fight appropriacy' is intended to take into account the fact that most pupils would consider fights to be inappropriate in some circumstances, even in the event of a dispute. For example, it is intended to take into account the fact that pupils would consider fights between Year 7 and Year 11 pupils to be 'unacceptable'.

At the outset, before I reflect upon the patterns of reported fights with the aid of these concepts, it is important to stress that in this final part of the chapter the cart is essentially put before the horse because much fuller reasons for believing that specific groups of pupils enjoy greater social power are outlined in chapters 8 - 10 below. In Chapter 8 the grounds for believing that boys dominate girls are presented. In Chapter 9 the grounds for believing that both white and Afro Caribbean pupils enjoy greater social power than South Asian pupils at City School are outlined. Further, the grounds for believing that, somewhat surprisingly, within the specific micro context of the school Afro Caribbean pupils possess even greater power than white youngsters are also examined. Finally, in Chapter 10, the reasons for believing that older pupils have greater social power than young pupils are outlined.

If for the present these fundamental divisions in power are assumed, what can we learn about the circumstances in which fights occur with the aid of our concepts? The way in which the concepts will be used can be introduced by focusing upon the response of some South Asian pupils when disputes with either white or Afro Caribbean pupils developed. In Chapter 5 it was seen that South Asian pupils were vulnerable to cussing by both white or Afro Caribbean pupils. Yet in the present chapter it was also seen that a surprisingly large number of fights between South Asian and Afro Caribbean pupils and

South Asian and white pupils were reported, given the small size of the South Asian community in the school. Is it possible that the concept of defence strategy is relevant here? This may help us to understand how South Asian pupils responded to bullying and verbal abuse. The point can be stated baldly. At City School it appeared that South Asian pupils at City School were prepared to resist when picked upon by white or Afro Caribbean pupils.

It was seen in Chapter 5 that there was little evidence of racialist verbal abuse between white and Afro Caribbean pupils. However, within the course of ordinary school-life there were inevitably many situations in which quarrels developed between white and Afro Caribbean pupils. It is surprising therefore that only three out of the forty eight reported fights were between white and Afro Caribbean pupils. That so few fights of this kind were reported in an institution in which white and Afro Caribbean pupils formed broadly 80% of the school population is especially puzzling.

Yet is it possible that some sense can be made of this through an appreciation of the underlying divisions in power which informed pupil interaction? I have already suggested that Afro Caribbean pupils were relatively more powerful than white pupils within the pupil social world at City School and the reasons for this assessment will be outlined fully in Chapter 9. It is possible therefore that a divergence in the power of white and Afro Caribbean pupils within the micro world of the school was reflected in a tendency for white pupils to adopt a submissive, 'quiet life' defensive strategy if quarrels with Afro Caribbean pupils developed in school.

Adequate consideration of this controversial observation would undoubtedly imply a far broader investigation of patterns of fighting within a range of secondary schools. It would clearly be valuable to know whether there is a more general tendency for pupils from specific

ethnic communities to adopt a 'quiet life', defensive strategy when potential conflicts in schools emerge. It might be suspected that the ethnic groups adopting this approach might vary from school to school in a way which reflects the particular demographic composition of individual schools, or in a way which reflects other important micro level influences.

We saw in the data section that there were few fights between boys and girls. In the few instances where fights between boys and girls occurred neither male nor female parties had a distinctive sense of remorse or surprise that these had occurred. The boys certainly did not have a strong sense of shame that they had been involved in fights of this type. Hence it would appear that the concept of 'fight appropriacy' does not fully explain why there were few 'real' fights between boys and girls.

Does the concept of a 'defence strategy' provide the possibility of a more adequate explanation? It is clearly possible that girls broadly coped with male aggression by letting boys have their own way. When we examine gender relations in Chapter 8, it will become clear that boys routinely dominated desirable resources at playground level. In addition, we shall see that though many girls resented this situation, they did not contest male control.

Yet there is clearly a danger that the concept of a 'defence strategy' may fall into the trap of blaming those who are in a position of weakness for their experience. In this instance there is a danger that a perception may develop that girls were to blame because they let the boys control the playgrounds. In contrast, it is the rationality of the response of girls which should be emphasised, given the relative power of boys in the school.

Another factor is also relevant. We also saw that girls

were seldom involved in high intensity fights. Whilst staffroom wisdom tended to suggest that fights between girls were becoming commonplace in the later stages of the research, the figures which related to reported fights (only five out of forty eight reported fights) firmly indicated that fights between girls were an occasional rather than routine feature of school-life at playground level. Yet, it will become clear in Chapter 8 that there was considerable evidence that disagreements and quarrels between girls were common and when, or where, friendship groups fragmented bullying was by no means unusual.

Is it possible that girls did not regard fighting as an appropriate way to sort out disputes? It may be suspected that alternative modes of resolving disputes - arrangements for 'not speaking' or exclusion from a friendship circle, for example - are of relevance here. Yet caution is still needed. In part the discrepancy in the reporting of fights which involved boys or girls may simply have reflected the fact that some fights between girls were channelled in the direction of the very effective female Deputy Headteacher.

That there are few real fights between children where there is a marked disparity in age is arguably unsurprising. Senior pupils over the age of 14 were not allowed on the Lower School site outside lesson time and so the grounds for disputes between senior and junior pupils were considerably less than for pupils from the three lower years required to spend their free-time at the crowded Lower School site. Of course, there was also a disparity in the power of older and younger children, a disparity which resided not merely in the greater physical size of older children. Psychological advantages for older pupils also accrued because their own friends were bigger as well.

At the same time it is possible that there was amongst pupils a

a general consensus that fights were inappropriate where there was a wide difference in age and many older pupils would, no doubt, have felt a strong sense of shame (and may have faced ridicule from their peers) had they become involved in 'real' fights with younger children. It is, however, important that this point is not over played since, as will become clearer in Chapter 7, some older children bullied their juniors. Thus, it is possible that a 'submissive response' by younger children was an important factor minimising the likelihood of physical conflict in the event of quarrels with older children.

What then did the data indicate about when high intensity fights are most likely to occur in the event of a quarrel between pupils?

It would seem that fights are most likely to occur where a consensus that a fight is appropriate is combined with a willingness or determination by both parties to resist. In Chart F some of the main ideas introduced in seeking to identify or predict the combination of social actors for whom quarrels may escalate into fights are presented. The chart prioritises the response of the party who is weaker in terms of the underlying social structure of the school. In presenting this speculative model it is of course important to draw attention once again to a fundamental point. Almost all the information emerging relating to fighting was about fights which involved boys. This information is presented in (i) and (ii). It cannot be assumed that where conflicts between girls emerged the same processes operated, but there was insufficient data to consider this point. The likely response of girls in the event of a serious quarrel with boys developing is summarised at (iii).

CHART F

POSSIBLE COMBATANTS		DEFENCE STRATEGY	APPROPRIATE TO FIGHT?	OUTCOME
(i) JUNIOR PUPIL	SENIOR PUPIL	Submissive behaviour by younger pupil	Inappropriate to fight	No fight
WHITE PUPIL	AFRO CARIBBEAN PUPIL	Submissive response by white pupil	Appropriate to fight	No fight (no fight outcome growing in strength as pupils mature)
SOUTH ASIAN PUPIL	WHITE PUPIL	Resistive response by South Asian pupil	Appropriate to fight	Fight
SOUTH ASIAN PUPIL	AFRO CARIBBEAN PUPIL	Resistive response by South Asian pupil	Appropriate to fight	Fight
(ii) (Similar Pupils)				
WHITE SECOND YEAR BOY	WHITE SECOND YEAR BOY	Willingness to fight	Appropriate to fight	Fight
AFRO CARIBBEAN YEAR 3 BOY	AFRO CARIBBEAN YEAR 3 BOY	Willingness to fight	Appropriate to fight	Fight
(iii) BOY	GIRL	Submissive behaviour by girl	Inappropriate to fight. But this belief under strain.	No fight, but this pattern under pressure.

In the absence of an established body of literature,it is fair to ask whether the line of argument developed in the later stages of this chapter has actually moved in the direction of analysis or whether it has simply restated the obvious in a rather roundabout and convoluted fashion. Though there is, perhaps, no easy answer to this point, it is important to stress that St. John Neil found that in serious play fighting the dominant party was able to raise or lower the level of aggression depending upon whether the weaker party acted in a physically submissive way (1976, p. 217). It is therefore arguable that the final part of this chapter has simply raised the possibility that somewhat similar, though more culturally and sociologically related, processes may occur and that these may cast some light upon when high intensity fights happen and when they are avoided.

The present chapter has identified the serious problem of high intensity fighting at City School. The fights which I dealt with in my role as a Head of Year hinted at the scale of this problem. Furthermore, other Heads of Years and the school's senior management were also heavily involved in coping with incidents of this type. Within this section I have also tried to understand some of the causes of fighting and have explored the possibility that an appreciation of the power relations which inform pupil interaction may help in the process of understanding when fights happen, or when they are avoided.

Two final points should be made. Firstly, I would acknowledge that there is a danger that I may have failed to convey the way in which the process of surveillance or threatening observation was central to the whole phenomenon of fighting. For fights did not merely occur in the presence of happy, appreciative, yet passive,

audiences. Instead high intensity fights were emotionally charged occasions when many pupils, not merely the combatants, were unpleasantly over-excited and aggressive. Furthermore fights could take place in the menacing presence of older pupils actively seeking to encourage further aggression. Secondly, it is important to stress that the study revealed that many fights were between status equals and did not involve any obvious bullying. Given the growing interest of research in the phenomenon of bullying, it is important to stress that incidents of reciprocated physical aggression which do not in any obvious sense involve bullying also have an immensely damaging effect upon school life. Further it may, in part, be through an appreciation of this, that a sense of the difference in pupil experience in some inner urban comprehensives, when compared with suburban schools, can be conveyed.

FOOTNOTES

(1) The impact of this cannot be assessed because the two Deputy Headteachers had different approaches to lunch time problems for much of the research period. One Deputy was very actively involved in lunch time supervision whilst the other took a more detached (managerial?) view which placed stress upon the need for all to work to role.

(2) This fight is the boy girl fight cited in the figures when Cohort A were in Year 8. Some of the fights which I cite in the course of general discussion are fights which did not take place during the Autumn Terms. These are therefore not recorded in the figures.

(3) There is no attempt to suggest here that the cussees should not have retained a vivid memory of this abuse.

(4) Interestingly pupils at City School used the term 'bad look', a term used by Goffman (1971). Bad looks at City School could be exchanged by children who did not know each other. In contrast, in Goffman (1971) the term 'bad look' relates to the way in which subordinate members of Mexican American gangs must display obedience to senior gang members.
Relations in Public. Micro Studies of the Public Order
(1971, p. 70) Penguin Books. First published in the U.S.A. by Basic Books Inc.

(5) On one occasion, for example, whilst returning from teaching in the Upper School at the end of the school day I came across a male supply teacher who was trying to stop a fight. The teacher's back had

been spat upon, and his brief case had been kicked around the playground whilst pupils were being openly obstructive.

(6) When I was responsible for Cohort B in Year 8 there were a considerable number of dramatic fights about girl/boy relationships involving children from the then Year 9. On a number of occasions the concerted effort of several members of staff was required to bring to a halt these fights.

CHAPTER 7

BULLYING

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first data is presented, and in the second a commentary upon the data is provided. I aim here to focus directly upon the concept of 'bullying'. The chapter examines what the word bullying means for pupils and refers to responses given by children in the context of group interviews. I also explore the varied complaints about bullying which I received in my occupational role as a Head of Year. When research about bullying was examined in Chapter 2, it was seen that studies frequently identify specific types of bullies or victims. The chapter examines whether such archetypal bully or victim figures are evident within the pupil population at City School.

Where an emphasis is placed upon personality there is a danger that the examination of power relations may be neglected. Within the commentary section I aim to avoid this trap. For example, when the actions of bullies who appear to be 'troubled' are considered, the possibility that their actions may display an implicit appreciation of the broader power divisions in the pupil social world is considered. Within the chapter, I do not focus directly upon 'race' or age or gender. Nevertheless, a sense of how groups of pupils may also be bullied emerges through consideration of situations in which groups of weak, work oriented, 'respectable' pupils are hassled by 'rough' pupil groupings.

Section One

Data

Pupil observations about bullying

When pupils were interviewed it rapidly became clear that the term cussing possessed a special potency for many informants. Invariably pupils were immediately able to cite many examples of cussing. In contrast, questions about bullying did not, in general, have such an immediate trigger effect. Some children did not think that there was a significant problem. For example, Gail, a pupil in Year 9, observed:

> I think that the school's best, it's one of things that the school's good for. I don't really notice myself that there's much bullying. I don't really notice it, which is good.

The term bullying varied in meaning for individual pupils. The ambiguity surrounding the term was, for example, in evidence in conversation with two Year 8 boys, Justin and Fahim. Fahim suggested that there was little bullying; it was implicit within this assessment that he did not regard racialist remarks as bullying for later in the same conversation he acknowledged that he was frequently the target of such comments. Yet within the same conversation Justin, his friend, operated with a qualitatively different definition of bullying and included the process of teasing about his 'special needs' as part of his more general experience of bullying.

In citing examples of bullying informants did not refer to cussing or to sexual and racial harassment: instead examples of 'picking on' (which included demands for money or bossing around) were offered. The overwhelming impression which emerged from the

interviews was that bullying, at least in its most obvious physical manifestations, was not a significant factor in the experience of most pupils. Whilst pupils who had not personally been bullied tended to think that there was no overall bullying problem, some pupils pointed out that there could be a hidden problem:

Ada: (a Year 9 girl)
Maybe it goes by unnoticed cos I don't see, I didn't know if a few times when I've seen that, like a first year and a third year, but I don't know whether they're just mucking about or something cos sometimes they just sort of muck around.

Inevitably the order of questions tended to elicit particular patterns of response. In some situations, for example, name calling may be an important facet of bullying, yet perhaps because in an earlier question pupils were asked about this as a discrete area, they tended to avoid references to cussing when describing bullying. Interestingly, whilst early in one interview three Year 7 girls, Estella, Nina and Sandra volunteered information about how they were harassed by boys in their form group, they insisted nonetheless that they had never been bullied at school.

In some interviews it was not easy to disentangle the underlying 'reality' from elements of embellishment induced through my encouragement. One Year 7 boy, Gulfraz, offered the following observations having initially mentioned the role of cussing as a form of teasing:

Gulfraz:
But sometimes people the same age in the same class may say like, 'get my bag over there' or 'get my piece of paper now' when you don't really want to and they sort of command you.

AS: So that may happen. Any other types?

Gulfraz: They may start punching you or kicking you for a joke. You can hear the, for the actual person.

AS: Yes.

Gulfraz: Because it's quite hard, they punch quite hard. You can hear the actual vibrations sometimes.

AS: Yes. What about people asking others for money? Does that ever happen (Gulfraz interjects 'it does') older people asking for money?

Gulfraz: Yes it happens quite a lot, but they lay off in the end and you can get away without lending them any money.

It was clear that some responses had to be treated with particular caution. Prior to beginning work on the present research I had been the form tutor to Class 7E. Robert,a highly able and mildly eccentric member of the class, had frequently been bullied during lessons. Whilst much of this bullying took relatively mild forms, (constant teasing, moving bags, for example) it was sufficiently serious to cause Robert frequent tears. Interestingly, even though interviewed alone,Robert insisted that he was not bullied. Yet in a separate interview the observations of four of his classmates, Dan, Paul, Adrian and Samuel, called the accuracy of his assessment into question. In the course of general discussion about classroom and playground bullying, Danny, who was something of a joker, claimed that there was a boy in his class who was a bully. This was in fact a mischievious reference to Robert, the victim. Danny expanded his claim through reference to Robert's bad breath:

> Well I blew a bubblegum and he thought I breathed on him (emphasis) and he turned

> round and breathed on me and he stirs it up like that sometimes some of the time. Most of the time he just turns round and breathes on you.

Adrian, however, offered an alternative, and more accurate, description of the situation in question:

> Well I would describe Danny (general laughter) as a wind-up merchant himself. Cos that person that I know he's talking about he's good (i.e. Robert's), very good. And he's only started to do this cos people are picking on him and nobody likes his breath cos it stinks so he breathes on everybody.

In this instance, the apparent gulf between Robert's understanding of his treatment by his peers and the insights about this process offered by his classmates was in itself a fruitful source of information about the phenomenon of bullying.

Bullying: data gathered as Head of Year

Some children were reluctant to talk in depth about the bullying problem in conversation with a teacher researcher. However, as Head of Year I gained an interesting alternative perspective from which to examine the problem and much of the data considered here focuses upon insights gained in this participant observer role. Data gathered in this capacity tended to show that the observations of optimistic pupils like Gail, who considered that there was not a significant bullying problem, had to be treated with some caution. It soon became apparent that there were some pupils who routinely bullied their classmates; equally, however, it was apparent that school-day free-time also tended to generate fresh instances of bullying. The bell signalling the end of lessons heralded a period of respite from

unwelcome attention for some students: for others the start of breaktime precipitated a period of difficulty.

Undoubtedly some pupils displayed a great capacity to dominate their classmates. They were able to make the lives of pupils they disliked a misery and were able to exercise an influence both in and outside the classroom. Thus, within a matter of a few weeks three girls felt the power, both physical and psychological, of Kimberley, a large girl in 8V. One day an irate mother stormed into school to demand a class change for her daughter because she had had her face slapped by Kimberley. On another occasion, Zahida, a second girl in the class, discovered that she had been ostracised by all the girls in the group. After this situation had persisted for several days, her father visited school and in the discussions which followed it rapidly became apparent that Kimberley was the driving force behind the period of unwelcome silence.

Kimberley's reign of terror came to an end in somewhat ironical circumstances when she became aware of the potentially very serious consequences of her actions on a third occasion. Mrs Hargreaves, the mother of Kirstie, another 8V girl, contacted school to complain that her daughter was truanting because she was being ostracised by classmates. Whilst this was being sorted out, Kirstie unwittingly solved the underlying problem of bullying by, apparently, 'running away'. In reality Kirstie had simply gone on a shopping expedition to the centre of the city accompanied by a sympathetic classmate, but scared by this dramatic development (and imagining that the girls had really run away) Kimberley sheepishly came to my office with a delegation of 8V girls and asserted that there was now 'no problem' because all the girls were 'good friends'.

Groups rather than individuals were behind much routine bullying.

For example,in 8XX Mike, Denzil, Jethro and Grant enjoyed the capacity to set the tone in many lessons and their activities disrupted the learning process for all classmates. Quiet,work-oriented, children in their form constantly suffered from their attention. Tipp-ex, and crayons would constantly be 'borrowed' from Milly, Eugine, Bridget, Colette and Patsy, a group of conformist 'pro school' girls in the form. Furthermore, when unsuspecting or naive staff permitted the boys to move around in lessons, other exasperating actions (for example, knocking books to the floor, or deliberately jolting tables, and chairs) would occur. Breaktime offered classmates a welcome opportunity to escape from this comparatively mild, but nonetheless frustrating behaviour.

Escape from bullying peers was not, however, always so easy. Quiet boys in 8RR, for example, complained about the actions of four 'rough' boys, Jed, Zachariah, Wayne and Joe, and claimed that they were frequently grabbed and held in American Wrestling locks. This happened both in lessons and unsupervised time connected with lessons (when moving between lessons or queueing outside lessons, for example). Interestingly, the complaint did not merely arise because of the physical contact: the victims, like many boys in the school, enjoyed play fighting. Instead the complaint stemmed from the character of the contact: in effect the 'rough' boys employed the techniques of American wrestlers in a way which really hurt and went well beyond mere play.

A fascinating example of the actions of Wayne and his friends occurred one day mid-way through a Mathematics lesson with a supply teacher. Larry, a bright and rather isolated boy, who could himself be something of a provocative bully, deliberately made outrageous comments to wind up Gracie,a new West African girl in the class,and a

frequent target of unpleasant teasing. Wayne and his friends immediately utilised Larry's verbal abuse as licence for physical aggression and charged (their own term 'rushed') across the class to give him a vigorous booting. Although this action was on this occasion not devoid of an element of rough justice, it was abundantly clear that Wayne and his friends could also employ this type of technique on occasions when there was no justification. Furthermore it was evident that the 'rough' boys could at times manufacture their own justifications for aggression! On one occasion, for example, Wayne picked a quarrel with Andrew a relatively quiet classmate, by claiming that Andrew was 'blanking him'.[1] Wayne and his friends were also skilled operators of an alternative, but related technique - screwing. We have already seen that pupils utilised the term 'screwing' to describe incidents when someone was given a 'bad look',[2] that is, staring in a threatening way. A distressed mother arrived in school one day because her son was afraid to come to school because Wayne and his friends were 'after him' and a claim that her son had given a 'bad look' to Wayne and his pals in the corridor lay at the heart of the problem.

It is arguable that patterns of bullying amongst girls, firmly belied any simplistic assumption that bullying was merely a problem which intertwined with masculine aggression. Bullying between girls could involve physical aggression and did not simply centre around influential girls able to turn their peers upon unfortunates who were thereby excluded from full participation in the activities of classmates. A problem starting in a Science lesson one day illustrates the point. Pupils were taught Science in sets which brought together pupils from different tutor groups. Whilst this organisational arrangement operated for very good reasons (it allowed,

for example, Science classes to be slightly smaller than full class size) it could, at times, be a possible source of friction. Four quiet girls from 8QQ, Shelley, Natalie, Libby and Linda, ran into difficulties with Verna and Abigail, two rather tougher, academically disenchanted, girls from 8PP. Shelley explained how the problem started:

> When I glanced at her she asked me what I was looking at. She said this several times. At the end of the lesson she stood behind me got her bag and hit me round the head near my face two times. I turned round and told her to stop it and asked her why she was doing it. She then hit me again and I grabbed her arm. She then grabbed my hair and pulled it. I then let go her arm. Only then did she let me go.

Interestingly this problem developed even though Shelley was with friends and was in a lesson! Linda, one of Shelley's friends was also able to describe what happened when the 'quiet' girls were subsequently hassled in the dining hall.

> When they started pulling and hitting Shelley I said, 'what means do you have pulling my friends hair?' She said, 'shut up' and other things. Then when I went out, 'sulky bitch'. Then when I went outside the dining hall one of them said, 'get her'.

Although it appeared on the surface that this problem simply reflected difficulties in Science lesson, it soon became apparent that it also reflected difficulties during free-time. Immediately after these incidents Shelley and her friends came to see me to complain, and it soon became clear that the girls had also been harassed in the dining hall on previous occasions; meals had been interfered with and food

thrown at them, for example.

After our conversation, I sent the girls away to their own tutor room so that I could find and then hold a properly informed discussion with the aggressors, Abigail and Verna. As things turned out this was not a wise move since Abigail and her friends were once again on the look out for the 8QQ girls and rapidly tracked them down in their tutor base. As Libby explains below an attempt to provoke a fight was made until a member of staff intervened:

> In Room 36 the girls came and with a group of other girls. Then they came over to Shelley and one of the girls pulled Shelley's hair and they said, 'Do you want to fight?' and she said, 'No' and pulled her hair even harder. 3

There was no evidence to suggest that extortion was a serious problem at City School. However, a number of reservations should be noted. Firstly, on occasions younger children were approached for small amounts of cash in the playgrounds, an activity which could occur under the guise of 'borrowing' money in order to buy at the breaktime tuck shop or from the ice cream van during the lunch break. It was moreover not entirely clear whether victims tended to put up with this without complaint in some circumstances - a possibility, perhaps, in situations where children felt intimidated and a possibility also where younger, inexperienced, pupils in the Lower School did not fully appreciate that money would not be returned until it was too late. In this context, it is important to note that the practice of 'borrowing' appeared to be firmly age stratified. 'Borrowing' also followed a firm gender divide: boys took from boys and girls from girls. A clear sense of proportion is arguably needed in relation to this phenomenon. Large sums of money were not involved

in these transactions; it was invariably a case of borrowing 20p towards the cost of an ice cream from the van or to settle debts accumulated playing 'penny up against the wall'.

There was,furthermore,no reason to assume that pupils who engaged in this enterprise were necessarily more likely to be involved in the second and more serious form of extortion - that is, demands for comparatively large sums of money at regular intervals. There was no evidence that this second form of extortion was commonplace. Nonetheless, I twice received complaints from parents because their daughters faced demands for large sums of money (about £5) from Chanel, a girl in 8SS. One of the victims had already paid money on a previous occasion before parental complaint helped to bring the problem out into the open.

Chanel, the girl who acquired money in this way, was for a time the central figure in a rude girl posse which included girls from a number of Year 8 (Cohort B) classes. Abigail and Verna, the two girls at the heart of the harassment of girls from 8QQ,were members of this group and therefore in the incident cited above the wider posse was mobilised when there was a possibility of a lunchtime fight in room 36. Other girls in the year had good reasons to feel rather wary when this group was in the vicinity.

The most unpleasant action of this group whilst in Year 8 actually took place on a local housing estate and not in school. A rumour spread one day that Tessa, a solitary girl who had been constantly bullied since primary school, and a girl who frequently truanted to look after younger brothers and sisters, had boasted that she could beat Chanel in a fight. Tessa was actually absent from school when this absurd rumour started and so after school one day members of Chanel's posse , together with older Year 9 boys, went to

her home on the neighbouring housing estate. When Tessa, holding an 18 month old baby, opened the door of the flat and stepped outside, one of the boys shut the door behind her. Then,whilst still holding the baby, she was kicked and punched by the gang before being left to go to her Grandmother's house in a neighbouring area to get a spare key to gain re-entry to the flat.

Bullies and Victims

The ability to offer a balanced portrayal of bullying may be undermined if undue emphasis is placed upon extreme and highly unusual incidents like the bullying of Tessa. I therefore aim here to examine rather more closely some of the characteristics of bullies and victims. Whilst some of the examples are clearly very serious, these instances are counterbalanced through examination of lower level 'routine' hassling.

Both pupil interview responses and complaints received in my work role as a Head of Year firmly supported the assumption that pupils perceived by their peers to be 'different' were especially likely to be victims. Many such victims apparently fall into the category of 'passive victim' identified in earlier research. Miranda, a small white haired girl, receiving special needs support was, for example, picked on by a number of classmates in 8FF and because she was so ordinary and inoffensive a child it was difficult to establish an explanation for why she was bullied beyond these factors.

Miranda was frequently bullied by Greta, a large, physically mature classmate. Her time at City School in fact came to an end after an especially harrowing incident which involved this larger girl. Following a parental request from a mother worried about Greta's harmful influence upon her own daughter Maxine, I moved this friend into a new class away from Greta. Unfortunately Greta blamed Miranda (who had previously been bullied by both girls) for this

change and attacked her after school. The assault was serious: Greta actually kicked Miranda on her forehead as she desperately tried to get into a car driven by the mother of Shabana, a South Asian friend and classmate. Very sadly elements of mobbing were also much in evidence on this occasion; other children with little or no idea what the problem was actually about joined in the assault.

How should Greta the aggressor in this incident be described? Should she be described as a genuinely nasty (seriously troubled?) bully? In the aftermath of this incident it was striking that Greta (who was subsequently moved out of the school) expressed no regrets or remorse. Her response was very different from that of most other children involved in serious incidents of bullying. For example, in marked contrast, once 'found out' the children involved in the attack upon Tessa, were obviously ashamed of their behaviour and, in addition to accepting the punishment considered to be appropriate, readily accepted an opportunity to write her letters of apology.

Whereas 'genuinely nasty bullies' do not feature in the established literature about bullying, another character type identified in many studies, the bully victim,[4] was much in evidence at City School. Larry, for instance, was a student who had changed class because he had been bullied. Yet, he had retained a tendency to say precisely the sorts of things which would antagonise or 'wind up' classmates. In the incident cited above (when I focused upon the aggression of 'rough groups') it was Larry's mocking of Gracie, an enthusiastic evangelical Christian, with outrageous remarks about Jesus, which led to the attack by his far from saintly classmates.

Martin, a pupil in 8LL tended to be the victim of aggression both in the playground and on his way to and from school. On the basis of his

behaviour in the classroom, however, it is arguable that Martin too could most aptly be described as a bully victim. He constantly upset his classmates by pushing cussing outside any ordinary frame of 'acceptability'. On one occasion, for example, he outraged his form by cussing a disabled classmate in a way which made fun of her disability.

Stephenson and Smith (1989) regard bully victims and provocative victims as distinct categories (in essence they see bully victims as children who bully and are bullied and provocative victims as children who make themselves the target of aggression without being aggressive towards others). However, this distinction is hard to sustain in practice: it is not always clear whether the bullying of bully victims represents an awkward and clumsy attempt to construct friendships. For example, it is arguable that Martin's extreme cussing may have reflected a desire to achieve status or gain friends amongst the boys in his class. He merely succeeded, however, in antagonizing the boys as well as the girls.

The very fine line between perceiving children to be bully victims or provocative victims is arguably illustrated through reference to Perry, a pupil in 8XX. There was no obvious way in which Perry bullied, but he appeared to have a facility nonetheless for unsettling other children. He apparently disturbed peers by silly remarks which upset the flow of lessons and through other actions which were not well-received like, for example, making frequent claims that items of personal equipment (pens and rulers, for example) were missing. Interestingly in his case transfer to another class which had a reputation for being particularly friendly, tolerant and accepting of diversity in pupil 'style' led to no obvious alleviation of underlying difficulties. Perry was no more successful than in his

previous class in constructing friendships with other children. In a sense in these new circumstances Perry became a provoker who was just simply ignored. Yet the relevance of how actions are received was well illustrated by Perry, for many of his actions were only marginally different from several classmates, but they inevitably tended to increase or confirm unpopularity when emanating from him!

Other pupils could, perhaps, best be allocated to an additional category - 'the unthinking prankster'. James, a student in 8SS, constantly irritated classmates by apparently 'thoughtless' pranks. For example, on one occasion, the parents of a classmate visited school after their son had been cut by a pencil which James had deliberately left to stick out of a chair.

Classificatory 'games', of course, run the risk of missing the very obvious. A great deal of bullying involved perfectly ordinary children who were normally friends. Bridget, Collette, Patsy, Eugine and Milly, the 'quiet girls' in 8XX, illustrate the point. The group quite rightly complained about their unpleasant treatment by the 'rough boys' in the class. Yet, somewhat ironically, they themselves constantly caused distress to one another and one or other member of the close friendship network was almost invariably excluded from full friendship. The girl excluded from full conversational rights varied over time, yet someone almost inevitably appeared to be in this unfortunate position.

The risk of missing the obvious when engaged in classificatory exercises applies, arguably, just as much to victims as to bullies themselves. Mere recognition that victims were often children perceived by their peers to be somewhat 'different' tends to mask another even less welcome point. It was clear that at City School, South Asian pupils were especially likely to be the target of bullies. In 8V, for example, Fahim experienced constant rejection in his

attempts to form friendships with white boys in the class and by the end of the year had begun to ally himself closely with two South Asian students, Sukhdeep and Abrar. Rejection of South Asian children could, of course, involve far more than mere discourtesy and trivial unpleasantnesses such as interference with bags and books. Thus Abigail attacked a new South Asian classmate who spoke little English because she mistakenly sat in her favoured seat and then refused to move.

Life was rarely easy for new pupils. Pupils transferring to City School part way through their secondary careers could in particular expect to experience problems. Malcolm, for example, was a bespectacled newcomer who had been moved because of the high level of inter pupil aggression in his first secondary school. Unfortunately his change of school did not markedly affect his experience and he rapidly ran into problems both in and outside the classroom. In his first month Malcolm was attacked in a corridor and was involved in a high intensity fight in a Mathematics lesson. Most depressingly, Malcolm was also the victim of an unpleasant incident in a Humanities lesson. The incident in question happened when the class teacher left the room to get some books from the staffroom. Several boys in the class had been baiting Malcolm by passing his bag around under the desks. Whilst the teacher was out of the room, one classmate calmly took the bag to the sink at the back of the room where he proceeded to turn on the taps and flood the bag. The dripping books and sodden bag were then returned to the desk of the bemused newcomer.

Section Two

Commentary

In Chapter 1 it was suggested that the focal concerns of this study leads, somewhat inevitably, towards a rather gloomy portrayal of pupil interaction. Furthermore, notwithstanding an underlying commitment to the notion of triangulation, in the sense of an appreciation that ethnographic research may be most secure or reliable where data gathered in a variety of ways provides reinforcement, support or confirmation, the danger still remains that work by teacher researchers may fall into the trap of exaggerating that which provides 'bad news'. In this context therefore it is important to emphasise that when pupils were interviewed in small groups, questions which focused upon the discrete term of 'bullying' did not in general lead to a firm assertion that there was a significant problem of bullying within the school. Yet recognition of this has to be counterbalanced through consideration of data which I gathered through my occupational role as a Head of Year.

The gulf between informants' comments when interviewed and the information which I gained in my participant observer role clarified many aspects of the bullying problem. It became clear when interviewing that a number of pupils felt that there was no bullying problem in the school. Yet this impression conflicted markedly with my experience as a Head of Year because incidents of bullying frequently came to attention following complaints by pupils and parents, or as a consequence of discussion with form tutors. Is it possible that some pupils are rather lacking in perception where the bullying experienced by others is concerned? It would after all not be altogether surprising if pupils tended to generalise on the basis of their own limited experience.

The only interview with an individual pupil raised a second

interesting possibility. It was noted that Robert in 8E was constantly bullied and yet when interviewed he asserted that this was not the case. In this instance, Robert's assessment of his experience contrasted not only with what I had learnt as his form tutor, but also with the comment of his classmate Adrian. It would, of course, be absurd to generalise on the basis of one isolated example: is it possible, however, that some pupils are reluctant to acknowledge - or even fail to recognise - when they are being bullied?

Some pupils who were bullied were clearly very reluctant to complain about their experiences, a factor which also has to be taken into account considering the scale of bullying in schools. Frequently information about bullying emerged in rather roundabout ways as, for example, when attention to a truancy problem brought bullying out into the open. For example, it was seen that Kirstie's truancy from 8J paved the way for identification of bullying by Kimberley. Parental contact was also a far from unusual initial source of information about bullying; a phone call from an anxious parent because of reluctance by a child to set off to school, or a complete refusal to attend could rather sadly provide first information about an underlying bullying problem.

Consideration of interview responses provides a further clue about why some pupils may fail to acknowledge, and as a consequence may also fail to seek help, when they are bullied. Attention was drawn to the fact that pupils did not necessarily share a common understanding of the meaning of the term. The observations of two friends, Fahim and Justin, illustrated the point and it was noted that the boys appeared to operate with a subtly different understanding of the term. Fahim claimed that there was a lot of racialist verbal abuse but did not, apparently, regard this as bullying because he also

argued that there was little bullying in the school. In contrast it was seen that Justin (a statemented pupil who received in class support for 0.2 of his timetable) operated with a rather wider concept of bullying and cited teasing about learning difficulties as part of this experience. This raises an intriguing possibility. Is it possible that where pupils tend to operate with a restricted 'definition' of the actus reus of bullying they may be prepared to tolerate a wider range of unacceptable actions as part of the rough and tumble of school life without complaint to a relevant adult?

A broader sense of uncertainty about what bullying constituted was evident in the interview responses of many pupils. It was acknowledged that in part this merely reflected the order followed in discussion; the fact that questions about bullying followed consideration of cussing, for example, tended to limit reference to verbal abuse when discussing 'bullying'. Nevertheless, recognition of the problems pupils experienced in discussing and in complaining openly about bullying, underlines the importance of schools making their procedures to deal with bullying explicit.

Victims and Bullies

Attention has already been drawn to Stephenson and Smith's (1989) helpful categorisation of types of bullies and victims. They identify the following categories: Bullies, Anxious Bullies, Victims, Anxious Victims, Provocative Victims, Bully/Victims. At City School many participants in the process of bullying corresponded closely to this model. However, there were clearly participants who did not neatly fit into their structure and for the purposes of the present study the categories identified in Chart A are most helpful and meaningful.

CHART A

BULLYING FIGURES	
ORDINARY BULLIES	'TROUBLED' BULLIES
Group Leaders Dominant figures in friendship networks. Able to turn other children against victim.	Unthinking Prankster Erratic. Sudden pranks tinged with aggression.
Group Members Do not initiate aggression. Follow example set by leader.	Bully/Victim Spiteful actions which distress other children. Make themselves the target for reciprocal abuse.
All Pupils ALL children capable of causing distress in specific circumstances without any apparent sense of compassion for the victim.	Nasty Bullies Form almost obsessional disliking/ distaste for specific pupils. Experience difficulty in expressing remorse. ..... Provocative Victims Actions irritate and confuse other children.

Chart A is intended to highlight the important fact that all children can on occasion bully. At the same time this observation is counterbalanced through acknowledgement that there may be bullies who have personality difficulties. Stephenson and Smith highlight the fact that many bullies are both 'secure' and 'popular' and show that many bullies do not conform to a stereotype which centres upon insecurity and unpopularity. Bullies classified under the heading 'ordinary bullies' in the present study correspond to their portrayal.

Kimberley, for example, was always the central figure amongst the girls in 8V (9V), and within the ebb and flow of friendship groupings

in her form she consistently remained the central figure in the 'in' group. Although her popularity could in part be accounted for by her personality, (she was a lively extrovert who relished gossip) the fact that she consistently remained popular with the bulk of her classmates is rather more surprising. Is it possible that a point made when we examined pupil interview responses offers one clue about why some bullies may retain popularity? It was suggested that pupils who were not bullied tended to assume that there was little bullying in the school. Are some children of this age somewhat lacking in sympathy where the bullying of others is concerned? If that is the case then the fact that a classmate who is a bully does not necessarily lose popularity begins to make more sense.

We have seen the most unlikely pupils (from the point of view of the teacher researcher) could bully. It was seen that the quiet girls in 8XX frequently and very understandably complained because of the unsolicited roughness of boys in their form. Yet at the same time they acted towards one friend, Michelle, for several days in a potentially highly distressing way by excluding her from conversation. Because of examples like this, it is vital to acknowledge the all too easily missed point that <u>all</u> pupils are capable of bullying from time to time. This is undoubtedly a point of particular significance. Firstly, it acts as a healthy corrective to the tendency to assume that bullies must possess a distinctive set of personality attributes which can account for their unpleasantness to other children. Secondly, it may offer a further clue as to why some pupils (like Kimberley, for example) who were more constantly involved in bullying, retain,nevertheless, some popularity.

Throughout the data section we repeatedly saw that bullying could involve groups distressing individuals. This was apparent in the

exclusion and rejection of a friend by a highly conformist and pro school group of classmates just as much as an attempt to secure money from a lonely individual in the playground by a would be posse. The tendency for there to be a numerical imbalance between bullies and victims was manifested most starkly in instances of mobbing. This is a point of fundamental importance because recognition that in many situations groups of children bully exposes the weaknesses inherent in any easy assumption that bullies possess distinct personality attributes which set them apart from other children.

However, recognition of the central role played by social groups in bullying at City School does not imply that all pupils were actually equally involved in bullying. Moreover, many pupils simply became involved in inter friendship group bullying: this essentially meant that when there was a quarrel within a friendship group an individual was ostracised or rejected. As a Head of Year I frequently had to deal with problems of this type and, although dificulties could sometimes persist for a surprising period of time before coming to adult attention, in these circumstances pupils would almost always be reconciled following discussion.

Sadly it was clear that some bullying was by pupils who in a rather more self conscious way set out to cause distress to other children. There were from time to time small gangs, or posses, who upset other pupils and acted in a way which mirrored the real or imagined street life of older youths. At one level there is perhaps a natural tendency for teaching staff to see the activities of such groups as play and to assume that therefore no real distress is caused to those who become the target for group activity. Yet the study showed that there is great room for caution before accepting this complacent perception.

The data section referred at several points to a 'posse' of girls in Year 8 (Cohort B) led by Chanel and undoubtedly many of the actions of these girls were highly distressing for their victims. The term 'hassling' most effectively described their focal activity in school: thus members of the posse would set up fights on the basis of imagined insults or glances; demands for money would be placed upon the weak and isolated; targeted pupils would be subjected to prolonged teasing, and in a way more generally pupils would be made to feel ill at ease or on guard in their presence. Menacing observation, or surveillance, was absolutely central to the activity of these girls. Yet it has to be noted that such surveillance was often inextricably interlinked with physical coercion. Members of this posse were, for example, involved in the physical intimidation of the quiet 8QQ girls in the dining hall and room 36. It would therefore seem to be misleading to assume that in the interactions of children there is inevitably a neat mirroring of Foucalt's perception of an underlying movement from physical to psychological forms of coercion. Chanel's posse were also invariably prepared to turn to physical action in pursuit of their goals.

Two other points should perhaps be made about Chanel's posse. Firstly, even though the group regarded itself as a 'rude girl' posse, and although a number of core members were Afro Caribbean, the group was far from racialist: other Afro Caribbean girls were frequently the target of its attention and from time to time white girls joined the group. Secondly, it must be noted that the playtime, not lesson time, was the focal point for group activity. Above all, it was during the lunch hour (when pupils were not subject to close teacher supervision) that a great deal of the bullying by this and other groups occurred. Furthermore much of this activity went by largely

unnoticed until complaints were received, and, of course, because of fear, complaint did not always follow.

Social class was never a primary area for consideration in the present study. Nonetheless there was an important social class divide at playground level. This divide can most aptly be described as the division between the 'rough' and the 'respectable' pupils, or, in a more extreme form, the division between 'posh' or 'swotty' boys and girls and other children. This distinction actually underpinned many of the examples cited in the data section. Highly 'respectable' 8QQ girls faced difficulties from members of Chanel's posse; quiet boys from 8RR frequently complained when they were hassled by Wayne and his close friends, and new pupils joining the school tended to face problems with students drawn from the 'rougher' sections of the Lower School population.

Undoubtedly many members of the teaching staff (with an educational background in suburban comprehensive schools or, in some cases, dating back to the privileged sector under the Tri-partite system) were peculiarly ill-placed to understand the daily predicament of 'respectable' working class and middle class children anxious merely for a 'quiet' life. Without doubt, however, many 'respectable' children found their early years at City School dispiriting.

Chart A implies that the primary distinction between bullies was between 'ordinary' and 'troubled' bullies. Reference to 'all' pupils in the 'ordinary' bullies section highlights the fact that many children were capable of acting in highly spiteful ways when quarrels emerged within friendship groups. Reference to the role of Chanel's self-styled posse and other somewhat looser groupings of 'rough' boys in 8XX and 8RR helps to highlight the predicament of 'respectable'

pupils, whilst also showing that bullies were not of necessity the possessors of distinctive personality attributes which set them apart from other children.

Yet there were undeniably bullies who appeared to be rather more 'troubled'. The terms 'nasty bully' or 'seriously troubled bully' are, for example, apt descriptors of Greta. A consideration of some of the points of difference between her actions and those of Kimberley make this rather more obvious.

Whilst the actions of Kimberley were most unpleasant and caused a great deal of distress to her victims, Kimberley clearly displayed an appreciation of appropriate social constraints upon behaviour in relation to other children. Indeed when it became obvious that two classmates had truanted because they had been excluded, at her instigation, from a friendship circle, Kimberley very actively tried to sort out the problem. No doubt a strong element of self interest informed her action but this was not altogether a bad thing; over a period of time Kimberley learnt from her mistakes and modified her behaviour. Whilst she continued to enjoy gossip and intrigue, she ceased to be a major bully.

Greta was entirely different. It was noted over a period of time she developed an almost obsessional disliking for a small, physically weaker classmate who she hassled, picked on and teased. For our present purposes, the key point is that despite protracted discussions following her act of physical aggression, Greta remained unwilling to go through even the formality of expressing regrets about her actions.

Two boys were described as 'bully victims' and emphasis was placed upon the way these boys made themselves the targets for aggression. Both Martin and Larry were well above average in ability and could amuse classmates by offering a healthy range of anti establishment humour or ordinary range cussing during the course of lessons. Interestingly, however, neither boy was popular because they were also readily prepared to push their witticisms into realms perceived to be 'bad taste' by classmates. We saw, for example, Martin cussed a physically disabled classmate. Both boys frequently complained that they were bullied and yet at the same time deliberately continued to say things which antagonised other children. We noted the way in which Martin cussed a physically disabled classmate.

Is it possible that something can be learnt through a focus upon the arenas in which such bully victims bully or are bullied? Within the classroom bully victims with over active tongues usually have some protection; protection, that is, provided through the presence of teachers. Outside the classroom, however, a nurtured reputation as an 'oddball' can cause problems. The experience of Martin and Larry broadly support this argument. Martin, for example, often complained that he was picked on in the playground and that he was bullied on the way to and from school. Interestingly no complaints from other children were made about the behaviour of these boys when not in lesson. Yet it must also be noted that the presence of a teacher was not automatic guarantor of safety in the classroom - thus Larry's offensive remarks to Gracie triggered an immediate 'game' in which he was attacked.

The classroom would also appear to be the natural locus for the activities of 'unthinking' pranksters. The traditional concept of

bullying stresses that a victim faces repeated even longstanding aggression. Yet it is also arguable that the notion of repetition may be applied to the actions of the aggressor. I would argue, for example, that James could fairly be described as a bully even though his pranks affected a range of children on one occasion only.

On the surface it would appear to be probable that all 'troubled' bullies would be disliked by classmates. Yet this was not the case. Greta, for example, was very popular with sections of her class. Is it possible that her popularity could be explained in terms of an underlying division between work orientated, 'respectable' pupils and 'rough' pupils hostile to the formal process of schooling? Greta's general pattern of misbehaviour and solidly defiant approach towards all adults ensured support from some peers and the specific demographic composition of her class may also have been a contributory factor. At the time of the research, because of the distorting process of pupil movement between schools, Greta's class was heavily dominated by 'rough' white and Afro Caribbean working class boys. 'Respectable' white or Afro Caribbean girls and a quiet group of South Asian boys suffered in this atmosphere,whilst Greta had a raucous, but appreciative, audience for her aggression.

Though it was seen in Chapter 6 that there were definitional difficulties associated with the term 'fighting', it is arguable that the term bullying is ultimately more problematic. For, in addition to obvious instances of bullying cited within this chapter, each chapter in this study contains material which focuses upon forms of bullying. Furthermore, the mere organisational process of channelling material which relates to cussing, fighting, age, gender or ethnic group relations towards separate chapters, creates a dual danger that the diminished, skeletal, portrayal of bullying offered here will be seen

to be something which hinges largely upon personalities and as a phenomenon detached from an underlying social context. Yet even when conceived somewhat narrowly it is arguable that the phenomenon of bullying cannot be entirely separated from a consideration of power.

There were signs, for example, that even 'troubled' bullies 'understood' the most obvious power divisions at playground level. For example, the term 'unthinking prankster' coined when focusing upon James, has, it might be suspected, to be used with extreme care for James' 'unthinking' pranks were invariably directed at other white or South Asian boys and not Afro Caribbean classmates. Equally the actions of the 'highly troubled' Greta were invariably channelled towards girls, not boys. Is it possible that even apparently 'troubled' children have an underlying appreciation of power divisions at playground or classroom level? Again recognition of this possibility is helpful, for it counteracts once again the easy assumption that the actions of 'disturbed' bullies can be understood merely through reference to their personality attributes.

That there is no simple unitary relationship between number and power is also well illustrated by the data. When many specific instances of bullying are examined there is an initial temptation to prioritise the notion of number by assuming that numerical advantage gives power. The advantage of number was after all central to processes like the exclusion of pupils for whom a distaste had been acquired from friendship networks. Kanter's study, Men and Women of the Corporation (1977), provides a fascinating glimpse of how a sensitivity to relative number can shed some light upon the experience of female workers in a large commercial corporation and suggests that this can account for some aspects of inequitable treatment. Yet interestingly Kanter does not claim that number has only one form of

effect: minority status may constrain opportunity, but it may also enhance work prospects since through heightened visibility minority workers may get noticed and progress.

The data presented provided strong grounds for believing that number did not simply have one form of effect in the pupil social world. For, whilst in an obvious and undoubted sense numerical power helped to empower bullies, some forms of bullying defy explanation in this way. Reference to Chanel's posse (a group to whom further attention is given in Chapter 9) illustrates the point. There were 7 or 8 core members in this group. Whilst the group primarily hassled isolated children around the school, (a factor fitting in neatly with a simple assumption that numerical advantage equals power) the overall effect of this action was that more children were hassled than were group members! More significantly posse members could also hassle other children when at a numerical disadvantage. This was evident for example, in their relationship with the swotty girls from 8QQ; on occasion six or seven 'swotty girls' could be hassled by two or three posse members! However, some of the examples of bullying cited within this chapter have highlighted the very important point that bullying may also occur where there is apparent equivalence in status. Thus, it was seen that bullying could occur amongst the 'quiet' girls in 8XX. It may be suspected that it is in these situations that the concept of number is of greatest explanatory significance: for in such circumstances the capacity to bully may be closely interlocked with the ability to turn group members against the victim.

Some harsh and depressing aspects of pupil interaction have received attention within the last three chapters as I have examined

aggressive forms of pupil interaction. It is important therefore to restate at this point that at City School for much of the time children acted in a highly thoughtful and considerate way towards one another. Nonetheless within the three chapters I have shown that at times pupils acted with less consideration and that those who possessed power were able to use their power to exploit the weak.

Within the three chapters it has been evident that the present study primarily aims to explore the sociological dimension of this power. It is fully conceded that there are many forms of power - the individual physical power that a pupil may possess through physical size or the situationally specific power that a small group may possess through numerical advantage, for example. Above all, however, the present study seeks to tease out the somewhat more elusive sociological dimension of power: the power, that is, which is possessed through membership of a specific status grouping with the Lower School.

Because of this focal interest attention moves in the next three chapters to a more comprehensive examination of the relationship between boys and girls, children from different ethnic groups and pupils located in different school age grades. It will be seen that many more examples of bullying or reciprocated aggression are highlighted as I focus upon these areas. Moreover, at the same time it will become clear that pupils from powerful groups are able to use their power to secure and maintain privileges in a way which is almost taken for granted.

Footnotes

Chapter 7

1. That is, failing to respond appropriately in a verbal exchange.

2. Op. cit. Chapter 6 p.128.

3. Shelley, Linda and Libby's comments were all written.

4. See, for example, Stephenson and Smith (1989) pages 52-55.

CHAPTER 8

GENDER

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first, the focal interests of the present study are identified and important insights from the M.A. study are outlined. Data is then presented. In the second a commentary upon the data is provided.

The dominance of the boys in relation to desirable options at playground level was identified in the M.A. study. Within this limited study there was not, however, an opportunity to ascertain how boys achieved, and maintained, their dominance. The present chapter therefore aims to determine how boys gain, and then use, their power in relation to desirable playtime options.

The phenomenon of sexual harassment, which constitutes a very clear example of bullying, is also examined. I seek here to ascertain whether sexual harassment is a greater problem for girls in lessons or school-day free-time.

When the data is analysed, attention focuses upon the 'how' of power. I therefore seek to identify the 'strategies' which enable boys to gain, and then use, their power. At the same time I seek to identify how girls try to respond to the constant injustices they encounter.

Section One

Data

The relationship between work on the M.A. playground study and the present research

During work on the M.A. playground study it became obvious that boys tended to monopolise 'desirable' play space and that girls' play opportunities tended to be restricted to the apparently least

attractive play areas. The three hard surface playgrounds were all monopolised by boys, and especially by older second and third years: the space was used for soccer and for a variety of 'rough' games, including stingball.[1] By contrast, when girls played 'playground games', they rarely, if ever, used the designated play areas. Instead their play was restricted to other parts of the school grounds, including covered ways, paths, 'out of bounds' areas and even the stairs and corridors of the main teaching block.[2] The hard surface playgrounds played no obvious part in the social life of most older Year 9 girls and during the lunch hour many of them left the school site altogether or simply remained in the school building. Interestingly, it became apparent that Year 7 boys and girls played together far more readily than older children. Their games were predominantly chasing games ('hide and seek', 'he on the lines', 'kiss chase' and through the school he') and these were confined to the school building and other areas of the school grounds: they were not, in other words, played in the designated, hard surface playgrounds.

A major leap is, of course, involved in movement from the mere observation of particular playground activities and patterns of space usage to the assertion that these features reflect and express a power relationship. Furthermore there were no shortage of pointers to the fact that the processes in operation was more complex than might appear at first sight. Thus, for example, the possibility that girls chose to play outside the designated play areas because they preferred chasing games for which the hard surface areas represented dull arenas in comparison with other areas of the school grounds (pathways, out of bounds areas, the corridors inside the school building) could not be dismissed too lightly. Nevertheless, the survey responses of many girls suggested that an experience of male domination in relation

to use of playtime resources was an important aspect of schooling for City School girls. One Year 7 pupil expressed her grievance at this injustice with particular clarity.

> There is nothing I like about the playgrounds because girls don't get a chance to go in there. The boys every day use all three playgrounds for football it is not fair! Boys take up all the room. If you had a playground just for girls the boys would probably go in there. And I am not sexist. 3

An important shortcoming of the study was that its focus was almost exclusively upon playgrounds and ironically this reduced the capacity to make confident assertions about the reasons for this absence. Work upon the present research provided an opportunity to take a fresh look at this problem and a chance to begin to tease out the 'mechanics' of gender domination both through identifying whether apparent inequities really did hinge upon differences in power and by exploring how boys secured, and maintained, control of desirable play space. Consideration of this point was important since the absence of girls could potentially merely reflect a preference for more interesting activities elsewhere.

Informants comments about male domination of the designated play areas

In the period between the research phases there had been no major alteration to the basic daily pattern of male domination of the three hard surface playgrounds. If anything the relative situation of girls had deteriorated. In the initial research younger boys also experienced difficulty in gaining access to the main play areas but throughout the time of the present study they were much more successful in this enterprise. Informants provided a variety of

insights. In part the absence of older girls from the designated play areas reflected a preference for other more congenial surroundings. Thus, for example, four Year 9 girls Fiona, Joyce, Andleeb and Melissa explained that they preferred to go into their form room instead of going outside:

Fiona: What it is, during lunchtime all three playgrounds there's boys on all three playgrounds playing football and so there's nothing that interests the girls.

AS: But surely - if I just press you on that for a moment, you could go on and push the boys off.

Joyce: Well in winter its too cold to go outside anyway so it gets boring standing around freezing to death. You may as well go inside anyway.

Andleeb: There's no point in pushing the boys off cos that's not going to do anything really - they'd come back and push us off.

AS: So you don't think you could push them off?

Melissa: I don't like playing outside anyway and if we did push the boys off we wouldn't play football anyway. There's nothing (strong emphasis) to do in the playgrounds.

An indifference to the pleasures of playing outside could not always be separated from recognition that girls who attempted to use the playgrounds would run into problems from their more aggressive male counterparts. One comment caught neatly the rather over exhuberant interest of the boys in playing outside:

> When the boys come out of their classroom they zoom in the playgrounds so you don't get a chance do you.
>
> Carol (Year 9)

However, whilst this striking comment serves as an interesting pointer to a general feeling amongst older girls, a feeling that boys inevitably dominated play space, this observation lacked accuracy as a description of the actual flow of events on many days. During the lunch break, the playgrounds would frequently remain relatively empty for the first twenty minutes whilst many pupils were in the dining hall. Thus 'zooming' was a phenomenon which - if it existed at all - was confined to morning break. Yet girls hardly ever took advantage when empty playground space presented itself and therefore the capacity of the somewhat fatalistic assumption which underpinned Carol's remark to shape the daily pattern of action should not be underestimated.

Nevertheless, it is important to appreciate that the girls inaction did not simply reflect a naive misreading of the intentions and actions of boys. Is it possible that their approach can,perhaps, best be understood as a consequence of previous rebuffs and evictions? It was abundantly clear that some boys considered that they had an almost proprietorial interest in the playgrounds and there were clues that it could be risky for girls to challenge this 'entitlement'. As part of the M.A. study, I had prepared a video of the school playgrounds one lunch hour. My objective in preparing the video was to gain an impression of whether the playgrounds were overcrowded on a 'typical' day, but on the day in question the playgrounds were unusually quiet because many boys were unusually slow leaving the dining hall. The playgrounds were virtually empty for several minutes and a small group of Year 7 girls began to take advantage of this situation, moving onto the playground and kicking a ball around. Eventually, however, the boys arrived and the girls dutifully gave up their game and retired to sit on the wall at the side of the

playground. I interviewed two of these girls, Nora and Dana, whilst working on the present study. Nora explained that they had been put off from playing football because the boys tended to get to the playground first and claim the space. Interestingly, however, few boys felt this sense of reserve when girls arrived first:

AS: ...Now going back to when you were playing football, you said that the boys would take over. How would they do that? Would they come and hit you? What would they do to get the space from you?

Nora: Well they'd just come in and start playing their games of football and everything, like kicking the ball where we're playing and everything and start running through our games - just spoiling it.

Even girls who had played for the school's successful U14 girls' football team proved incapable of breaking the pattern of male domination of the hard surface play areas. Ada and Gail were two girls who had been enthusiastic members of this side and I was therefore especially keen to discover why they did not play soccer during free-time.

AS: Now both you girls played football quite a lot lower down the school. Why don't you go on to the playgrounds and play football?

Ada: Well mainly because you can't really get a space out there because there's mostly boys and if you do go out there sort of thing, I don't know, you're sort of pushed into a corner sort of thing because they're all playing the big playground or most of the playground. But I suppose you could play patball but that isn't much really.

It was not just girls who liked football who found their

opportunities restricted. The boys' enjoyment of rough play also limited the options available to girls when playing chasing games. Few older girls played chasing games, but Sheila and Martha were two who still did and they restricted their play to safe areas:

AS:	When you play 'had' do you go on to the actual playgrounds or do you just stay on other part of the grounds?
Sheila:	We stay on other parts we don't go on the actual playgrounds.
AS:	Why don't you go on to the playgrounds Sheila?
Sheila:	Oh we used to but we used to keep getting the ball hit in our face and it's far too violent.
AS:	The ball gets hit in your face. Why does that happen?
Sheila:	The people playing there they just don't care if you're in the way they just kick the ball and go running into you and everything.
AS:	So you're put off for that reason?
Sheila:	Yeah.
AS:	What about you (to Martha) Is that the same?
Martha:	Yeah.
AS:	You find that you're put off by...
Martha:	Yes because they're violent you know. They try to show off by kicking the ball hard and instead of kicking it in the goal they kick it in your, our, faces.
AS:	Who are 'they'? Are 'they' boys or girls?
Martha:	It's boys.

Sadly it appeared that upon entry to secondary school most girls swiftly learnt that the playgrounds were not for them. Norma, an Afro

Caribbean girl in Year 7, explained how she had quickly been deterred from playing football when I asked her about what she would most like to do during the lunch break:

> Well I used to think that you could play, (cos I used to play football here) but when I saw lots of crowds of boys in there playing football and seeing how your ball gets taken away by other people, I didn't bother wanting to play football any more dinner times.

The process of learning begun by Year 7 girls such as Norma - a process of learning to surrender the best play areas to the boys - arguably found its later expression in the indifference of older girls to play. Male domination of play space was, it appeared, primarily secured through an assumption of a right to possession. Because of the indifference of older girls to play it was tempting to suggest that an amicable negotiated order emerged. Yet this view would appear to be flawed. Male domination rested ultimately upon the potential to act with force where more genteel tactics proved ineffective. This capacity to secure space through intimidatory tactics was made abundantly clear in conversation with Martha and Sheila and the following conversation developed after Sheila suggested that the boys were sometimes deliberately rough in order to gain control of space:

AS: How do they get that space? Is it by playing rough, as Sheila says, or is it in other ways?

Martha: No like me and Sheila and Jocelyn and all that we used to go in there and play football ourselves, but, and we just used to pass it around and not kick it hard or anything. But then they started kicking it - their ball - hard and it kept hitting us and we came out of there and in every

> other playground just boys making themselves comfortable in there. But girls did, you know, feel scared to go in these cos boys are in there. They play stingball (4) and they don't care what happens to them.

Some boys also recognised that boys tended to dominate the best play areas. Yet the explanations for this situation provided by Year 8 and Year 9 boys largely placed emphasis upon the apathy and inactivity of girls rather than the capacity of boys to deter:

> Boys take up most of that space (i.e. the hard surface playgrounds). Cos the girls just walk around in there. Just in there, walking around.
>
> Steve (Year 9)

Furthermore the girls were regarded as 'fair weather' users of the playgrounds and this was regarded as a factor which reduced the legitimacy of their claim to playground space. In contrast,the boys considered that their claim to playground space was validated by their willingness to go out in all weathers:

> Cos if we (the boys) come to school one day and the girls either have the choice to stay in or go out there they'd stay in here. They'd stay in here, they wouldn't want to go outside at breaktime. But when its raining all the boys go outside and play football and the girls just stay in.
>
> Patrick (Year 8)

Informants comments about male domination of classrooms

An opportunity to assess the accuracy of the alternative explanations for the boys' domination of the playgrounds was provided through consideration of lunchtime use of the school building. If indoor

facilities were used in an equitable way then the case argued by boys such as Steve and Patrick would gain a respect it would not deserve if it became clear that boys also dominated indoor facilities. Pupils were permitted to use form rooms during the lunch hour. Form rooms were used for a variety of activities, table tennis, card games and homework,[5] as well as sitting around and chatting. Many girls took full advantage of the opportunities provided by this arrangement. For example, denied access to the playgrounds, Norma and her friends displayed both creativity and adaptability by developing their own form of indoor 'patball'[6] and were sufficiently generous to let Tim, a Year 7 boy from another form, play. Yet though enjoyed, such indoor activities often merely represented a second best choice. Furthermore in some situations boys also monopolised the space for the most energetic and interesting indoor activities! The topic of table tennis came up in discussion with one group of Year 9 girls:

Joyce:	I like playing table tennis as well but the boys have got all those table tennis tables and stuff.
AS:	Right now that's an interesting thing because we seem to be back on one of the main problems. You seem to like playing indoor activities but the boys dominate those as well?
All:	Yeah
AS:	Could I ask you is there no way you could tell them to get off the table?
All:	No, no, no (as if surprised at my naivety)
Joyce:	All the boys crowded round the table and say, 'oh go away I want to play' (exaggerated politeness)
AS:	So you couldn't eject them even if you wanted to?
Joyce:	But I wouldn't because I'd be too embarassed in there.

AS:	Embarrassed? Cos they'd tease you? But they wouldn't hit you, they wouldn't stop you, physically stop you?
Joyce:	No they'd just go, 'stupid fool'.
Glenda:	Yeah you can't have girls playing the game you know.

The key focus for our present purposes is upon what happened where there was any rivalry about resources and facilities. In relation to indoor space it must readily be acknowledged that there was often no conflict at all; both boys and girls could, for example, take advantage of the availability of the library. However, wherever rivalry emerged boys displayed a facility for securing advantages, a point which casts considerable doubt upon the claim that boys dominated the playgrounds merely because the girls lacked interest in these areas. Arguably the major difference between indoors and outdoors was that the skills required to secure male domination varied in these two contexts. Outdoors the capacity to deter by rough play was a particularly important feature of the male repetoire. Yet indoors such crude physicality was of less obvious value and the capacity to deter by ridicule was of greater importance.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment like 'choice' of playground activity can provide an important clue about the power divisions which may be expressed in the social relations of boys and girls in school. The M.A. study was extremely limited in its capacity to gain insight about this phenomenon. Within the present research however opportunity arose for a closer examination of this particularly worrying problem and of the clues it provided about continued inequities in gender relations. No attempt was made to focus upon the issue of physical sexual harassment whilst interviewing pupils.[8] However, the role of Head of Year was

especially useful in this context. It provided a real opportunity to learn about the grievances of girls, many of whom were willing to openly express their sense of anger or injustice when boys behaved inappropriately.

A further advantage of this role was that attention was continually drawn to the very complex problems involved in interpreting and understanding incidents of apparent sexual harassment. In the role of Head of Year an important pastoral principle is, arguably, to recognise that pupils are children and not simply small adults. Pupils are not, on the whole, armed with the confidences and certainties which may accrue with adulthood and therefore it is not surprising that the areas of sexual expression can be characterised by experimentation and confusion. Adolescence is after all a time for encountering the new - a point which teachers, or other adults, inhabiting a world offering progressively fewer surprises are apt to forget.

Work in the role of Head of Year also provided a useful glimpse of some of the competing pressures which can intrude when an attempt is made to understand the phenomenon of sexual harassment. For example, at City School the Women's Group[9] powerfully argued for a uniformity in response when dealing with all incidents which involved physical sexual harassment. This created a pressure therefore to simply focus upon the area of actus reus when dealing with the involvement of children in specific instances of apparent harassment. Yet, whilst the good reasons for adopting this approach in a male dominated society are obvious, it is arguable that the actual ethical and practical basis of this stance may at times be less secure. It is not, for example, always clear that children can be treated fairly if no attempt is made to examine the area of volition.

Inevitably the area of relationships throws up problems of particular complexity because this aspect of adolescent life can be characterised by clumsiness, mistakes, confusion and experimentation. An incident which involved two boys and one girl illustrates the point. One day at the end of school there was a commotion in the entrance to the second floor boys' toilets. Whilst passing down the corridor another boy 'dropped' those involved in trouble by deliberately saying, 'there's a girl in the boys' toilets'.[10] I was put into a situation where I had inevitably to respond to his comment. When I reached the lavatory block two boys and a girl sheepishly emerged from one cubicle. On the surface this incident looked like a case of sexual harassment and this impression was reinforced through a series of rapid excuses by the boys which centred upon taking the girl's bus pass in a game before running to the 'sanctuary' of the toilets.

Because I wanted to respond to this incident in a balanced way, I wanted to discuss this incident with the Deputy Head (pastoral) before deciding upon an appropriate course of action and so after briefly counselling the pupils I let them go home, telling them to report to my office the next morning. Ironically when I left school somewhat later and went down to the bus stop I bumped into the girl and the boys again since they also were waiting for the bus. I took their continued chuminess whilst waiting to indicate that the incident in the toilet blocks did not merely involve simple one directional sexual harassment; alternative descriptions (mutual harassment, flirtation?) would appear to be more appropriate. Because no other members of staff had become involved in dealing with this incident there was no difficulty in acting on the basis of this assessment. However, the situation would have been likely to become altogether more confused had the initial incident been reported by a teaching colleague: that

would have started a chain of events in which the need to be seen to be taking a firm line of action may have occupied a position of primacy.

At City School there were abundant signs that sexual harassment formed an important and very unpleasant part of the experience of some girls. The experience of girls in class 8J (later 9J) serves as a helpful illustration. The treatment of girls in the form whilst sticking up for a small boy who was being bullied was noted in Chapter 7. Girls in 8J constantly ran the risk of physical sexual harassment and made many complaints about the boys in their class. Sally, for example, complained following an incident when she left her seat to get a work card in Maths lesson:

> Sometimes Bernard and Gopal try to touch me, Jane or Elizabeth's chest and Ruth as well. They try your bottom as well. Today in Maths Bernard put his hand up my skirt to touched my bottom. Sometimes I hit them out but I am not a violent person but he has just gone too far and I want something done about it. I don't know about the others but I think they do to.
>
> (Written comment)

Alice, a classmate, accompanied Sally and she highlighted the more general problem of harassment in the group:

> Most of the boys touch Sally up.
> Bill did touch me last week but I told him not to and he said OK then and he didn't any more. The boys who touch up most of the girls are:
>
> Bernard not me Sally, Ruth, Jane
> Matthew not much
> Earl not me Sally Ruth or Jane
> Ron not much
> Gopal not me only Sally, Ruth or Jane
>
> It is never Daniel or John

> Bernard is the worst one. Ruth always get touched up by the above listed.
>
> (Written comment)

These incidents were undoubtedly very upsetting for the girls. More than ten girls left this class during its time in Years 8 and 9 and although this reflected the high rate of mobility typical of inner city schools, the problem of harassment was a background factor in a number of decisions to transfer. Many different strategies (including the tutorial programme, counselling, contact with parents and the transfer of some boys to other tutor groups) were used before the problem was overcome.

This section has concentrated upon male domination of resources and opportunities and sexual harassment. As a consequence, there is a danger that a portrayal of gender relations which distorts by merely placing emphasis upon negative aspects of boy-girl interaction emerges. Yet in fact a great deal of boy-girl interaction was characterised by vitality, friendliness and humour. A comment made by one Year 8 boy in which he described how girls from his form would disrupt the games of his friends drew attention to this cheery and less combative world.

> If they've got a tennis ball they just throw it cos its somebody's property (i.e. the boys) they just like to annoy you and run about with it.

There was therefore far more to boy-girl relations at City School than a confrontational pattern of bullying and domination.

Section Two

Commentary

In the course of fieldwork both opportunity structures and the phenomenon of sexual harassment were examined. Two questions recurrently underpinned the data section and it is arguable that both highlighted the relative power of boys and showed how bullying could occur. Firstly, structures of opportunity were addressed by tackling the question: where there is conflict over prestige activities in school is it boys or girls who get their own way? Secondly, the question of whether it was boys or girls who subjected members of the opposite sex to harassment was addressed. The section also briefly noted interpretational dilemmas which teaching staff may encounter in coping with sexual harassment.

Because the M.A. study had already identified the underlying pattern of male domination at playground level, it could, perhaps, be claimed that by highlighting the continuing pattern of domination the present study identified little that was new or surprising. This observation is not entirely fair, however, because the present study pointed to the perpetuation and reproduction of this pattern of male domination over a further five year period. Moreover, problems continued in spite of the genuinely energetic efforts of staff to focus upon gender inequality within the formal school curriculum (and in spite of the fact that fresh generations of pupils entered the Lower School from primary schools where teachers were anxious to engage with the same concerns?)[11]

We have already seen that a primary objective of the present study was to go beyond the mere identification of structures of domination by teasing out some of the mechanisms which assisted this process. With specific reference to this point key interviews were

with older girls. Many older (Year 9) girls appeared to be indifferent about the possibility of play in the hard surface playgrounds and therefore it was especially important to explore whether such apparent apathy was a simple consequence of the process of maturation or whether over time boys had played a rather more active role in deterring girls from this option.

On the one hand it was seen that there could be no doubt that many Year 9 girls were far from fired with enthusiasm about the possibility of spending more time playing in the playgrounds:

> Well in winter its too cold to go outside anyway and so it gets boring standing around freezing to death.
>
> Joyce
>
> I don't like playing football outside anyway and if we did push the boys off we wouldn't play football anyway.
>
> Melissa

Others felt differently however and these perceptions were balanced through reference to observations of girls with a clear interest in sport. For example, it was seen that Ada and Gail did not play football in the playground even though they had been members of the school's successful girls' football team. Whilst it is important that the gradual tendency for girls to lose interest in outdoor play in school playgrounds at a somewhat earlier age than boys is acknowledged, it is equally clear that this should not be given undue emphasis.

It was seen that male aggression could, and did, play a major part in deterring girls from games in the playgrounds. This point was implicit in several interview responses:

> ...they're violent you know. They try to show off kicking the ball hard and instead of kicking it in the goal they kick it in your faces. (Martha)
>
> ...oh we used to but we used to keep getting the ball hit in our face and its far too violent. (Sheila)
>
> ...there's no point in pushing the boys off cos that's not going to do anything really - they'd just come back and push us off. (Andleeb)

The actual aggression of some boys was therefore a key factor which constrained the playtime options of girls. Further, this aggression rendered the option of outdoor play unattractive for some girls at a stage when this option was still attractive for some; at an age, in other words, when this option may have held greater appeal in an environment free of aggression.

I placed emphasis upon the use of informants' responses in presenting data. It is important, nevertheless, to stress that observation provided data consistent with the interview responses of girls. For example, the physical discomfort of many girls when in playground 3 (the playground which had to be crossed when going to the Upper School) was visually obvious. During the lunch hour girls making their way over to the Music Department at the Upper School scurried alertly through the playground with a rapidity only to be matched by teachers setting out on the same hazardous trek! It should undoubtedly be acknowledged that one of the grosser injustices for all pupils (the shortage of playground space) contributed to the particular expression of male domination here: the possibilities for being hit by balls are presumably much greater at grossly cramped inner city schools than at spacious suburban campuses. Yet recognition of this should clearly not detract from appreciation of the primary concern - it was, after all, boys who monopolised the main

play areas.

The research did not set out to focus upon flirtation or the formation of boy/girl friendships. However, it became evident that this could modify the solidity of male domination of outdoor play space. During a phase when there was a great deal of flirting between Year 9 pupils it was seen that a number of Year 9 girls were able to gain access to playground 2 in order to take part in mixed games of basketball.[12] This shared activity showed that boys would 'let' girls play when it suited. Yet such games provided cosmetic not real change. In effect the active participation of girls changed the character of the games: the games ceased to be serious 'matches' and became instead highly front stage opportunities to display both 'cool' and skill. Thus male domination appeared to remain largely unscathed and girls remained absent from the play areas when boys were 'seriously' playing.

Attention was drawn to the somewhat ironical point that, whilst many girls were prepared to complain that they never got a chance to go in the playgrounds, there were occasions when the playgrounds remained empty for prolonged periods of time - 'they zoom in the playgrounds' (Carol, above). Again here the gulf between the visual evidence available in the process of participant observation and the responses of girls when interviewed helpfully illuminates the character of male-female interaction in the Lower School. For example, it was noted that there were occasions when the playgrounds were empty. Yet even at such times girls rarely started games. A claim was therefore advanced suggesting that this reflected a process of learning. In effect after transfer to secondary school girls learnt (or re-learnt) that they should not occupy playground space, and Norma (a Year 7 pupil) was quoted at length in making this point. Although

her observation stated the dilemma faced by new girls in the school most sharply, there was in fact an abundance of evidence to explain why girls 'learnt' not to play on the playgrounds. Girls repeatedly complained that their games were disrupted or marginalised as a result of the aggressive play of boys:

Nora:	...running through our games - just spoiling it.
Ada:	...you're sort of pushed into a corner sort of thing

Interestingly the case for suggesting that girls gradually 'learnt' that the playgrounds were not for them was strongly supported by data which emerged through my participant observer role. As a Head of Year, I rarely, if ever, received complaints from girls because they were unable to find playground space and this lack of complaint appears to support the view that most girls accepted rather fatalistically that they would be denied equality of opportunity in this respect. Certainly this contrasts sharply with the articulate responses which girls provided when they discussed the issue of access to playgrounds in interviews.

Is it fair to suggest that in mixed schools boys will always develop arguments which help them to secure more than their fair share of resources or opportunities? We noted that in relation to outdoor facilities boys tried to 'legitimate' their dominance of available space through reference to arguments which appeared highly 'reasonable'. For example, Steve placed emphasis upon the inactivity of girls and Patrick pointed out that boys would 'go out in all weathers'. Consideration of the question of access to indoor play facilities assumed a particular importance because boys lacked a

readily available set of claims to justify, or legitimate, the appropriation of an unfair portion of available opportunity (for example, time at a table tennis table). Yet it was seen that boys still dominated available facilities!

The issue of the tactics employed in securing domination of indoor facilities is considered more fully below. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that consideration of the issue of access to indoor facilities raises questions about the impact of the anti sexist curriculum. Boys were able to dominate resources even when they lacked obvious arguments to support their appropriation of an unfair advantage; conversely girls were unable to claim a fair portion of available opportunity even when boys lacked obvious grounds for gaining, and retaining, a position of dominance.

It is arguable that activity in classrooms at lunchtime is helpfully illuminated through Goffman's dramaturgical model (1959). When Year 9 pupils gathered around a table tennis table, it was highly important for boys to perform competently and with the appropriate degree of 'cool'. By contrast, girls were cast simply in the role of onlookers. Yet there could be no easy assumption that this drama followed an egalitarian script. For, whilst boys clearly occupied centre stage, girls were unhappy that they simply had to wait in the wings:

> I like playing table tennis as well but the boys have got all those table tennis tables and stuff.
>
> Joyce

Strategies

Given the overwhelming evidence that boys continued to dominate in the

pupil social world throughout the years of the present study, the most pertinent questions were actually the Foucauldian questions - the questions, that is, which relate to the how of power. How were boys able to retain a position of dominance? What strategies enabled boys to retain a privileged position in relation to significant free-time opportunities? Further, what techniques were individual girls who were physically harassed able to employ? What techniques too were employed by broader groups of girls, if, or when, they found themselves denied access to resources or opportunities which were their right or entitlement?

i) Boys' Strategies

The main strategy groups of boys employed in securing dominance of play areas was the direct technique of 'taking over' any contested play space. Boys blindly (or not so blindly) assumed that they had a 'right' to occupy the playgrounds. Further, boys were able to offer arguments which 'legitimated' this dominance: Steve's contention that the girls would not make full use of the playgrounds, (his words, 'just in there walking around'); and Patrick's claim that girls would remain in the building when it was raining) supported this assumption of right to possession.

At a more fundamental level the boys' dominance of desirable play space was underpinned by their manipulation of a discourse about 'worthwhile' playground activity. It was through an appeal to this discourse that football could override 'just walking around'. Rough play (for example, the throwing of tennis balls at bodies in stingball) could also help to overcome resistance and assert control of play areas. When interviewed girls overwhelmingly suggested that this was deliberate. However, in fairness, it is by no means clear that rough play was consciously used as a ploy to gain play

space: the play of many boys was at times also extremely rough in the absence of girls. Nevertheless, whatever the underlying level of intent, the effect of boys' rough play was undoubtedly to drive girls away from the playgrounds. Carol's observation, moreover, illustrated another worrying tendency - the tendency for balls to be taken in the process of driving girls out of the playgrounds.

Teasing was a key aspect of a more general process of surveillance which enabled boys to assert, and maintain, their control. Teasing could prove effective both in the school building and playgrounds. Teasing had a double effect. On the surface teasing tended to make the recipients uncomfortable and thereby anxious to surrender the equipment needed for the desired activity - (bats for table tennis, for example). There was, however, a deeper underlying effect: teasing could generate a feeling that girls were engaged in inappropriate pastimes when taking part in lunchtime classroom-based activities like table tennis, or when playing football in the playground. Above all, teasing was effective because it played upon the idea that girls were incompetent and short of the technical skills required for participation in sporting activities. The fact that girls did give up showed the power of teasing since it appeared to override the impact of the anti sexist curriculum and to override organisational arrangements (for example, mixed games lessons) intended to promote equality of opportunity.

There are, of course, dangers when it is assumed, that all strategies of power serve one purpose and are of one force. Consideration of some of the points raised by Goldman in 'Towards a Theory of Social Power' is helpful here. It will be remembered that Goldman placed emphasis upon locating the actual issue, or range of issues in relation to which power is held (1986, p. 158). Three of the

identified strategies - assumption of a right to possession, deliberate rough play and teasing of performance - related very closely to the acquisition of opportunities to play in a desirable context. It is noteworthy that both the strategies boys used, and the benefits they gained, were social. The mutual rough play of boys gained an opportunity for play in playgrounds free from the 'cluttering' presence of girls. Equally teasing was effective precisely because it took place in the presence of an appreciative or supportive audience.

However, somewhat different issues are raised by the phenomenon of 'pushing in'. This gained essentially an individual benefit - an early meal,for example. Interestingly it was far from clear that all boys were capable of this action (not least because it required movement past other boys in queues!). Furthermore,it appeared that some older girls were also capable of taking this step without resistance from waiting younger boys.

An additional degree of caution is needed in any attempt to make sense of the study's insights with regard to sexual harassment and as a consequence no formal strategy is identified relating to this phenomenon. It is,nonetheless, possible to trace important features of this process. From consideration of the data relating to 8J and 9J, it became clear that girls felt that the focus of boys' activity could change over time and that at any given moment the interest of all the boys would tend to be upon one 'targeted' girl. An initially puzzling point was that harassment apparently largely occurred in lessons or during other time in class (registration, lesson changeover whilst waiting for teachers, for example) rather than during free-time. There is undoubtedly a great need to be cautious about this finding since it may be explained by the fact that during the lunch break

girls had other and potentially better routes to channel complaints - complaint to the very effective female Deputy Headteacher. Yet there is undoubtedly a need to be conscious that lessons may throw up an opportunity for harassment in the process of movement around classrooms in the course of lessons. Moreover, a ready justification of any uninvited activity, capable of satisfying teachers aware of the tendency for lessons to be boring and anxious to maintain a reasonable flow of work within a lesson, is available through claims that uninvited physical attention is 'accidental'.

Attention was drawn in Chapter 7 to the fact that relative number cannot satisfactorily explain all variations in the power of pupils groupings; it was seen, for example, that Chanel's posse could bully other girls even when at a numerical disadvantage. Nevertheless an appreciation of the potential significance of relative number may cast light upon some issues. For instance, at times it may be a significant factor in considering sexual harassment. If a school has an imbalance in the number of boys and girls on roll, and if the imbalance within form groups is further aggravated through absenteeism (several girls in 8J/9J, the class cited as having the most serious problem, had a very poor attendance record) then scope for harassment may increase. In class under some conditions boys may be able to benefit from the approving support of their peers and the isolation of girls. Outside lessons, however, girls enjoy the freedom to meet up and associate with their friends. Boys may also be dispersed around the playgrounds and the scope for physical harassment may be less.

ii) Girls' Strategies

Because they were few, if any, signs that girls were prepared to contest male dominance where incipient quarrels developed about play space, the term 'adaptation' is the most apt descriptor of

the predominant response of girls in reaction to the boys' determination to secure personal or collective advantages.

It was suggested in the M.A. study that an amicable social order emerged whereby boys dominated the hard surface playgrounds ideal for ball games and girls largely controlled other parts of the school grounds, including the corridors of the main school building which offered an ideal terrain for chasing games. Yet the present study cast great doubt upon this optimistic and complacent interpretation. Above all, it was seen that a process of learning helped to explain the absence of girls from the main playgrounds. For example, such learning was implicit in Carol's observations about her choice of the relative peace of the school building instead of the rough and tumble of the playgrounds:

> Well I used to think that you could play, (cos I used to play football here) but when I saw lots of crowds of boys in there playing football and seeing your ball gets taken away by other people, I didn't bother wanting to play football any more dinner times.

Yet even activity choices in the school building were under threat and it is therefore not surprising that a preferred activity choice for many older girls was to go off site. There were,in fact, extremely few 'legitimate' on site options available for girls. Year 7 younger girls who enjoyed chasing games could quite happily play 'he' around the school grounds or through the school building. For older girls there were, however, simply the choices of work in the library, conversation in a classroom, the 'deviant' choice of conversation combined with smoking in the toilets or the appealing option of departure from the site. Other legitimate option choices -

table tennis in classrooms or common rooms (preferred forms of ball games in playgrounds, for example) were largely unavailable, because of the boys.

Interestingly girls were apparently much more prepared to contest rather than merely to adjust to activities which represented a more direct attack upon their personal identity and which clearly involved bullying. For example, it was noted that girls were prepared to complain when verbally abused and this often drew upon group support. A delegation of girls would typically arrive at my office door in order to lend support to a girl who had been the target of abuse. Whilst no doubt many girls suffered verbal abuse in silence without complaint, group support gave many girls the confidence to complain. The strategy of complaint to a member of staff was, of course, also available to girls who were the target for physical sexual harassment and the support of friends was especially valued by girls who had been the target for such abuse.

The ultimate strategy available for girls in the face of bullying by boys was the individual strategy of making a request to be allowed to change school. A reluctance to approach teaching staff in the early stages of a problem was sometimes a factor in situations which would be resolved by transfer. It was also possible to create pressure in favour of the transfer 'solution' through truancy or through a refusal to return to school after a problem had been tackled. Two further somewhat speculative points should be made about this 'strategy'. First, it could be, and more commonly was, used when there was bullying between girls. This was perhaps because many girls were more likely to be bullied by their peers than sexually harassed by boys. Second, the 'strategy' of request for transfer was also at times used by boys who were deeply unhappy in school.

In this chapter I have suggested that boys at City School possessed a formidable battery of powers. At City School boys were able to secure and maintain an almost exclusive control of desirable play facilities. Further, where new opportunities were created boys soon asserted control. Girls, but not boys, were subjected to sexual harassment.

Even though in many situations the dominance of boys operated at a 'taken for granted' level, I have shown that the boys could also maintain control where there was resistance. Yet the firmest recognition of the power of boys does not merely reside in recognition that boys held power in a way which satisfies the Weberian notion of overcoming resistance. Thus, it has been seen that the power of boys materially affected the decisions of girls relating to free-time opportunities. Their power was then a constraining, hegemonic power, which penetrated to the very heart of the way in which girls were able to arrange and structure their activity possibilities during free-time.

Dahl (1986) has drawn attention to the similarity between power relations and causal relations. Yet consideration of gender relations in the context of free-time activity provide few grounds to run scared in the face of this connection. For it has been seen that at City School attempts by girls to contest male control of 'opportunities' were largely, if not inevitably, doomed to failure. Further, it has been seen that initially optimistic assumptions about their prospects with regard to activity options became with the passage of time progressively more pessimistic.

Footnotes

Chapter 8

1. A chasing game in which anyone hit by the ball becomes 'on it'.

2. A map which details where these games were played is included in Appendix 2 .

3. Written survey response from M.A. study.

4. A form of 'had' in which someone becomes 'on it' when they are hit by a tennis ball.

5. The school permitted lunch time use of the school building because of recognition of the limitations of the school site. In addition, other advantages of this arrangement were fully appreciated.

6. A game rather like squash which involves use of the palm of the hand to hit a tennis ball against a wall.

7. In the initial years after the school allowed pupils to remain in the building during the lunch hour, pupils were permitted to play table tennis. They were allowed to re-arrange desks for this activity.

8. I believed that it was inappropriate to focus upon this problem within the context of group interviews. Further, I was conscious that it was arrogant to assume that girls would be in a position to be open about this problem when talking to a male researcher.

9. An informal group which provided mutual friendship, support and encouragement.

10. It may be felt that the wisest response for a teacher in this situation would simply be to ignore the remark. However, I felt that this response would have been inappropriate.

11. I am not claiming here that all primary schools would have pursued this objective with equal vigour. However, the research took place in an era when there was an authority-wide impetus to address the problem of gender inequality.

12. This phase of more intense flirtation coincided also with a period when there were frequent fights between Year 9 boys about the formation of, and breaking off of, relationships with girls. This point was briefly mentioned in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 9

'RACE'

This chapter comprises two sections. In the first, the central research interests of this part of the study are identified and some of the important ethical questions which this chapter raises are noted. Data is then presented. In the second, a commentary upon the data is provided.

It will become clear that the experience of working at City School led to an openness to the possibility that, notwithstanding the fact that white pupils constituted the largest single grouping within the overall school population, Afro Caribbean pupils could constitute a dominating force during school-day free-time in some circumstances. This chapter explores this possibility. The chapter also aims to examine the experience of African, South Asian and South European pupils.

Because of the highly unusual concerns of this chapter I would like to stress that I had no reason to doubt that at City School white pupils could constitute a dominant force in many significant curricular-related ways in school. These were not prioritised, however, because my focal interest was the examination of social relations between pupils during school-day free-time.

Section One

Data

Perception of racialism

This study essentially draws upon the lightweight, common sense, view that every individual member of a given society has both the potential to execute, and to be a victim of, racialism. A preliminary example illustrates why I would argue that it is valuable to adopt this

stance. One morning Banda, an African girl, who had moved from Kenya to the UK at the age of ten, came to see me and complained that she was being cussed by both white and Afro Caribbean children in her class. It became apparent that many classmates were involved in this cussing which had racist overtones. Equally, it rapidly became clear that Banda was upset by the actions of all the children: she did not make any distinctions between white or Afro Caribbean classmates.

Is it possible to claim that individuals from an ethnic minority group which encounters a great deal of racism outside school can be capable of racialist acts in school? If it is accepted that individual children from a minority ethnic grouping, notwithstanding their 'victim' experience outside, are capable of racialist acts in school, then it also follows that pupils from a minority ethnic grouping which form a significant share of a school population may be capable of acting as a dominating force in some circumstances. In addition to the obvious potential for white pupils to act in this way, the specific demographic structure of City School rendered it especially likely that it would be Afro Caribbean pupils who would possess this capacity, since Afro Caribbean pupils constituted by far the largest ethnic minority grouping in the school.

In Chapter 4 it was seen that throughout the research period white pupils were the single largest 'ethnic' group at City School and that they constituted roughly 50% of the school population. Yet it is arguable that the white section of the school population was a particularly disparate grouping. In everyday life outside school white pupils did not have to run the gauntlet of a hostile racialist society and not surprisingly there was no obvious overriding factor to bring cohesion to this grouping in school. Furthermore the factors which tended to divide the white population should not be underestimated: it comprised locally born children from over 30

feeder primary schools; the children of migrants from the north drawn to the affluent south in the search for work; the children of immigrants from Eire, and of course, most importantly of all, the whole grouping was also fragmented upon social class lines.

Even though some of these factors also affected the Afro Caribbean community, it is arguable that an awareness of facing a hostile racialist society gave Afro Caribbean children a sharp sense of shared identity. It was seen in Chapter 4 that broadly 30% of the school population were children with an Afro Caribbean family background. Moreover, on a typical day Afro Caribbean pupils tended to form a somewhat larger proportion of the school population because, in general, attitudes towards regular attendance were particularly positive in the Afro Caribbean community. Furthermore important processes of haemorrhage hit the white community harder than the Afro Caribbean community. As age cohorts moved through the school, disproportionate numbers of white middle class children were lost to the private sector. Further, disproportionate numbers of white working class children 'anticipated' the job market and left school early to start work.[1]

Ethical and methodological considerations

At the interview stage no attempt was made to press the issue of whether pupils felt that there was a dominant ethnic group at City School. For questions which touched upon race relations ethical considerations outweighed the commitment to 'pure' research. I was acutely aware that friction could be created where harmony previously existed simply as a result of inappropriate and clumsy probing. When interviewed in small groups pupils were subject to a variety of constraining forces and it was therefore inevitable, and also perhaps desirable, that any responses which touched upon race relations would be guarded. Understandably pupils were very anxious to demonstrate

they were not racialist, yet any comment implying that one particular grouping was somewhat dominant could very easily be interpreted as racialist by other children.[2] Informants were moreover engaged in a far from 'natural' conversation: a conversation with a teacher researcher is after all an unlikely setting for pupils to take risks and there is a danger that pupils will simply express guarded views which recognize a teacher's hostility to racism.

The failure to directly ask whether a specific ethnic group was dominant also reflected an underlying dilemma. Afro Caribbean pupils formed, in my subjective opinion, the only grouping which could realistically be considered to be dominant, at playground level. Yet to create a conversation in which this possibility might be suggested, was to begin to travel a route that I was most reluctant to follow, given the history of exploitation experienced by the black community at the hands of white society. I felt, in other words, that when interviewing, it was an intellectually valid exercise to focus upon the experience of ethnic minorities as victims of racism, but that it was much less acceptable for a white researcher to focus upon the potentially exploitative role of sections of any minority community.

All this angst, of course, solved nothing. If sense was to be made of the social world of pupils, it was inevitable that the relationship between ethnic groups would have to be explored and therefore data focusing upon this theme, but gathered indirectly, would have to occupy a position of primacy. To make observations about specific situations without questioning relevant social actors about their experiences is to enter a very uneasy world. Equally, to fall back largely upon observation is quite obviously to risk an unacceptable degree of subjectivity, even where general observation includes data gathered through very helpful participant observer

roles. It is fully appreciated that bias and selective perception can penetrate when data is gathered every bit as much as when a gloss is put upon data in 'analysis'. Because of this it is stressed that the core argument developed in this chapter (which suggests that Afro Caribbean pupils constitute the most powerful ethnic group at playground level) is presented both with caution and uncertainty.

Group formation

Through its focus upon activity patterns in the playground and consideration of use of playground space, an optimistic impression which suggested an encouraging level of racial harmony in the school had emerged in the M.A. study. It was seen that ethnic background was not a factor which determined access to, or exclusion from, playground games. Instead pupils formed play networks which reflected gender, age and membership of tutor groups. With additional optimism, it was suggested that life at playground level was underpinned by a 'homogenising pulse'[3] and that the experience of playing together helped pupils to develop loyalties, affinities and friendships which transcended ethnic boundaries.

It would, of course, be misleading to read too much into simple patterns of playground grouping since the fact that pupils from different ethnic groups played together did not exclude the possibility of antagonisms or tensions developing in rather more subtle ways. Continued observation of the playground during the present study, combined with data gathered through the role of Head of Year, firmly suggested that the initial assessment was in some respects somewhat simplistic.

Pupils from minority ethnic groupings with relatively few children in the school, for example, tended to be well aware of the value of close association or allegiance with other children from the

same ethnic group in a way which did not merely reflect appreciation of a shared home language and cultural tradition. All new entrants to City School were interviewed with their parents before admission and on occasions parents specifically requested the placement of their child in a form which contained other children from the same ethnic group. For example, when Suleiman, a Turkish pupil, arrived from The King's School (a school at which he had been bullied) his father specifically requested placement in a class with other Turkish children.

Moreover, the experiences of South Asian pupils at the nearby Primrose Primary School hinted at the potential defensive utility of such alliances. During a period when South Asian pupils were being hassled and bullied as they dropped off, or collected,younger brothers and sisters from the Primary School, South Asian pupils frequently gathered before venturing down the road. Coincidentally, I had to speak to Fahim, one of this group, after school on a number of occasions during this period. At the end of such conversations, I invariably discovered a row of boys waiting outside my office for a boy whose fighting prowess was of especial value during a troublesome period for the small South Asian community.

Given the established tendency for adolescent boys to form loose friendship associations, it was not surprising that large groupings involving ten or more boys were often in evidence around the Lower School during free-time. Especially at lunchtime large groupings of Year 9 boys were frequently to be seen standing around enjoying conversation rather than chasing around playing games. Because white and Afro Caribbean boys were the overwhelming majority in the Lower School, it was to be expected that they would dominate these groupings. Yet, prolonged observation of the playground (which included the opportunities provided through my role as a

Lunch Time Supervisor) indicated something interesting about these groups. Large, ethnically exclusive, groupings frequently solely comprised Afro Caribbean boys. In contrast, whilst white boys were to be seen when and where mixed ethnic groups congregated, large groupings made up exclusively of white boys were rarely, if ever, to be seen in the school playgrounds.

A closer observation of the progression of Afro Caribbean boys from three classes, 8R, 8J, 8V through Year 9 and on into Year 10 at the Upper School illustrates the point. The three classes were linked for Science lessons (where there was setting), for Games and for a variety of technical subjects in which pupils were taught in reduced size teaching groups. This arrangement created the possibility for close association between boys from different classes. Interestingly by Year 9 a large grouping of Afro Caribbean boys from the three classes enjoyed regular free-time conversation, though no parallel pattern of closer association between white boys in the three classes was evident at playground level.

An intriguing feature of this group (which I shall for convenience call 'The Best Friends') was that it included boys with very varying levels of ability, boys who were very positive about school and boys who were extremely hostile to the process of schooling. By Year 10 the group had developed an even closer sense of identity: movement from the Upper School site, to return to the Lower School building complex for some lessons, would be delayed, for example because the boys would assemble outside the Upper School main building prior to departure to the Lower School building. Moreover, at the end of the day the group would assemble at either the Upper or Lower School site prior to collective departure.

Discussion of what we may learn about power relations at playground level from the existence of large, 'high profile' ethnically exclusive friendship groups like 'The Best Friends' is provided below.

It is ,nonetheless, important to note that at this point no broader ethnically exclusive grouping emerged in the parallel blocked classes (classes N, B and E) which were also timetabled together for some subjects. In the case of these classes, boys overwhelmingly continued to prefer the company of other boys, African,white or South Asian,from their own tutor group during free-time.

Evidence from more formal school contexts also showed that, in these situations at least, any pressures which operated to channel boys into ethnically exclusive groupings could be resisted. For example, one lunch hour each week, I ran a mixed (that is boys and girls) soccer league. Classes selected their own teams for this activity and it was therefore particularly interesting to see what selection criteria pupils used. There was clear evidence that amongst boys competence not identity was the primary criterion. By contrast, in some, though not all, classes there was a great reluctance to ensure that the appropriate number of girls were included within teams. Thus, boys in tutor groups were well able to sort out in a 'fair' way which boys should represent the class, whilst at the same time making a variety of sexist assumptions, including the assumption that the main role in selecting sides should be taken by boys not girls.

Not unexpectedly, given the tendency for girls to spend leisure time in smaller somewhat tighter friendship groupings than boys, there was amongst girls little visible evidence of the formation of large ethnically exclusive friendship groupings at playground level. Nevertheless,when bullying was examined in Chapter 7, it was seen that a self-styled posse, led by Chanel, emerged whilst Cohort B were in Year 8. The majority of girls within the group were Afro Caribbean. Emphasis was,however, placed upon the fact that the posse was not an ethnically exclusive grouping since from time to time white girls were

members of the group and the physical aggression of members was directed at other Afro Caribbeans as well as other girls within the year.

When the policy implications of this study are considered in Chapter 12, it will be claimed that City School would have benefitted greatly had Afro Caribbean teachers occupied positions of senior management within the school. Inevitably there was a danger that the entirely innocent actions of Afro Caribbean pupils could be viewed as threatening in situations where similar behaviour by white or South Asian pupils would have been entirely disregarded. Interestingly, this capacity to misread the actions of Afro Caribbean pupils was not merely confined to white teachers. For instance, whilst eating her lunch in the dining hall one day Chantelle, an African teacher, became very concerned when a large group of Afro Caribbean boys gathered on the central grass area outside the dining hall, but her fears that a fight was about to start proved to be entirely unfounded. This instance highlights the important point that where, as here, a claim is developed that Afro Caribbean pupils could act as a dominating force at playground level, rather more is required than sketchy observations of playground grouping patterns unsupported by interview responses.

What then were the main reasons for believing that Afro Caribbean pupils possessed the power necessary to act as a dominating force at playground level in some circumstances? In developing an answer to this question it is necessary to pay attention to four key questions. Which pupils were able to openly express allegiance to gangs? Which, if any, ethnic grouping could form an ethnically exclusive mob in response to real, or imagined, racist verbal abuse? Which ethnic grouping could provide effective 'back up' in the event of fights with children from other ethnic groups? Which ethnic grouping enjoyed the

'entitlement' to full-site freedom? Attention therefore moves to these key questions.

Signs of domination

i) Mobbing

Olweus' concept of mobbing (essentially the phenomenon of an apparently 'spontaneous' attack upon an isolated child) was introduced in Chapter 2 and the escalation of the attack upon Miranda was noted in Chapter 7. It is important to stress that in this incident both the primary aggressor and victim were white. However, the incident also showed that there was a potential for multi ethnic mobs to form; both white and Afro Caribbean pupils became involved in the assault. Though on the surface mobbing is a 'spontaneous' act, it is essential to recognise that mobbing is also a social act. Because of the central interest of this study in the power relations which are expressed within patterns of aggression, it is therefore important to explore the extent to which pupils from different ethnic groups possessed the capacity to form ethnically exclusive mobs.

How, for example, do pupils respond when they encounter racially abusive language? In Chapter 5 it was seen that South Asian pupils routinely faced racialist cussing through the crude use of racialist terminology or, on occasion, gestures which conveyed images of dirtiness or inferiority. There was, however, never any evidence to suggest that South Asian pupils could collectively offer a physical response to contest such abuse.

Given the offensive and highly inflamatory character of racialist abuse, it is not altogether surprising that a response to such abuse may be swift. Amongst children in an environment in which there was an almost routine willingness to resort to physical aggression to resolve quarrels, it is arguable that inaction deserves to be viewed as just

as problematic as a willingness to turn to reactive aggression.

There was a fundamental difference in the way in which Afro Caribbean and South Asian pupils could respond to verbal abuse. One very sorry incident, in which all the children, both surface aggressors and victim, can in truth be most effectively described as 'victims', serves as an illustration. Towards the end of lunch hour one day a frantic dinner lady appeared at the staffroom. A group of fifty or more Afro Caribbean children had mobbed a white girl because it was thought that she had said the word 'nigger'. A second dinner lady had been hurt in the crush as pupils steamed through the school building before the hysterical victim found sanctuary behind the closed doors of the secretaries' office. When order had been restored, it became clear that the word had not been used. Worse was to follow. It became clear that the rumour of its use had been deliberately started by a classmate anxious to get her own back following a petty quarrel. Yet the vulnerability of other Afro Caribbean children to such rumour is perhaps not surprising, given that Afro Caribbean pupils have to come to terms both with the historical legacy of exploitation at the hands of white society and the dispiriting experience of encounter with continued racism in society at large outside school.

Thankfully incidents of this kind were extremely rare. Yet this does not necessarily give grounds for a complacent belief that good race relations had been achieved. It is also possible that the rarity of such incidents may actually reveal a great deal about pupil perceptions of power relations at playground level. Any racist white pupils clearly knew the reaction which would follow from racialist abuse of Afro Caribbean pupils. However, no such risks were attached to abuse of South Asian youngsters. It has already been seen that

pupils were fully aware of differences in the experiences of pupils passing through school. For example, Jacqui a Year 10 Afro Caribbean pupil, noted that South Asian pupils faced occasional verbal abuse:

> You get the odd ones like right like you get people saying Pakkis and all that stuff like that you know to them. But I've never heard a real black (emphasis) racial one you know about the blacks but mainly about the Indians I hear the odd ones.

And the comments of Jacob (cited in Chapter 5) hinted at an implicit appreciation of power divisions at playground level. Thus, having acknowledged that South Asian pupils got cussed, Jacob offered one possible explanation about why Afro Caribbean boys were not verbally abused:

AS:	...What about West Indian boys Jacob? Does that happen? Do they get cussed?
Jacob:	No they don't really get cussed.
AS:	Why don't they get cussed?
Jacob:	They'd get beaten up maybe. 4

ii) 'Back-up'

The provision of effective 'back-up', in the event of quarrels with children from other ethnic groupings in the school, represented a second important sign of the power of Afro Caribbean pupils within the pupil social world. Further, it is possible that an appreciation of this capacity was part of pupils' shared understanding of school life. There were good reasons for white or South Asian pupils to feel somewhat wary if quarrels with Afro Caribbean pupils developed. Knowledge of this capacity to supply 'back-up' contributed to the

achievement of 'psychological' dominance at playground level.

An unpleasant fight in the girls' toilets illustrates the point. Bose, an African girl,was jostled in the dining queue one lunchtime by a number of Afro Caribbean girls. The quarrel escalated, involving cusses such as 'Bush' (an inference that Bose was from the jungle), remarks about personal hygiene and eventually mother cussing. When Bose visited the girls' toilets later in the lunch break, a serious fight erupted. Much to the surprise of Maureen (the aggressor), Bose began to get the better of the encounter until two other Afro Caribbean girls joined in to lend support to their friend.

Not surprisingly older siblings and their friends tended to be key figures in the provision of 'back-up'. On one occasion Harvinder, a South Asian student, fought with an Afro Caribbean classmate in a dispute which started from playful cussing for which both boys were equally to blame. Harvinder won this initial fight,but he was then 'defeated' in a second fight which involved Derek's older brother and took place in the presence of older Afro Caribbean boys. This second fight then drew the incident to a close.

The ability to mobilise 'back-up', or the ability to gain ascendancy through creative use of the caution which arose from the fears of other children about this capacity, was also evident in situations where children were hassled or threatened. Moreover, where the grip of such fear was tightest there was an understandable reluctance by pupils to seek adult help - a factor worthy of consideration in assessing the significance of the capacity to threaten or mobilise 'back-up'. On two separate occasions, for example, white pupils in 8V truanted as a consequence of hassling by Marlon, an Afro Caribbean classmate. On the first occasion, Ian, a Scottish pupil experiencing some difficulty adjusting to life in the south, was repeatedly stopped on his way to or from school and challenged to

fight. Though Ian was not afraid of the much smaller Marlon, his fear of Marlon's friends led to truancy and the incidents only came to light as a consequence of parental involvement which followed this non attendance. Several months later Philip, another classmate, truanted when he was challenged to a fight by Marlon after P.E. lesson. As in the first instance, the real problem for Philip was not the challenge of Marlon, but the background difficulty of how to cope with Marlon's friends.

Other children were, apparently, rather more aware that complaint to a teacher could reduce fears which related to the capacity of a pupil to mobilise 'back-up'. For example, Trevor and Colin, two white Year 9 pupils, came and complained that they were being hassled for money in the playground by Errol an Afro Caribbean pupil in Year 8 who had accumulated debts playing 'penny up against the wall'.[5] In this instance they had already refused to hand over money but, nevertheless, took this cautionary step in order to increase their ability to resist subsequent threats.

iii) Gang Allegiance

Further clues about power divisions emerge from consideration of the open expression of allegiance to gangs outside school. Because the fieldwork took several years I observed the emergence, or decline, of interests and pastimes. For example, in the early stages of fieldwork, the game of 'penny up against the wall' enjoyed a phase of popularity until suddenly going into decline because of formal school attention to the problem and the departure of leading enthusiasts to the Upper School. In the later stages of the research, street gangs outside school became a focus of pupil interest in a way in which had not been the case in the early stages of the study.

Information about gangs in the locality was acquired in a variety

of informal ways, which included listening to pupils' incidental conversations about gangs and the process of discussion with an 'A' level Sociology set. Although it needs to be stressed that because such gangs did not form part of the formal school-based research project, and even though no formal research techniques were utilised to gain information about gangs, interesting clues about the significance of gangs within the pupil social world emerged.[6] When I focused upon the themes of deviancy and media amplification in 'A' level Sociology, for example, I put forward the view that the press tended to exaggerate the power of gangs. Yet the students in the class were extremely scornful of this argument and asserted that even within the locality of the school there were gangs which were extremely powerful and that gang members demonstrated with regularity that they could beat up any youth for whom they had developed a distaste.

Within the vicinity of the school there were in fact two main gangs - The Down Town Boys and The Crew. Both groups were Afro Caribbean gangs and from time to time older boys in Years 10 and 11 were fringe members of these groups. Whilst The Crew was a gang which was prepared to tolerate limited white membership, The Down Town Boys chose to limit its membership exclusively to Afro Caribbean youths. Thankfully it was not possible for white youths at City School to claim allegiance to exclusivist white gangs; nor were there ever any signs in school that South Asian pupils were able to express allegiance to South Asian gangs. Yet it was possible to express open allegiance to The Down Town Boys and The Crew.

Three illustrations of this are helpful. Firstly, graffiti around the school buildings, referred to the activities of the two groups and younger pupils would playfully claim, or make accusations

of, allegiance to either grouping. Secondly, when the fact that cussing could sometimes be fun was highlighted in Chapter 5 attention was drawn to the playful conversations between Chanel and Afro Caribbean boys in 8SS. These conversations tended to be filled with accusations of and counterclaims about membership of the gangs. Thirdly, during the phase when gangs were 'popular', some Lower School pupils adopted the practice of wearing a green scarf, a sign of allegiance to The Down Town Boys.

Whilst much of this activity was on the surface merely harmlessly playful and fanciful, identification of this tendency offers a further possible explanation of why some white, South Asian or African children were cautious and anxious to avoid quarrels with Afro Caribbean pupils in school. Identity with the activities and aspirations of Afro Caribbean gangs outside school was no doubt a resource which offered power and status amongst and between Afro Caribbean pupils, and this may well have been the primary factor accounting for claims of allegiance. Nonetheless, it should not be assumed that an environment in which pupils from other ethnic groupings lacked this capacity to claim such allegiance was entirely devoid of an element of threat.

iv) Full-site freedom

The term full-site freedom refers to the phenomenon of youthful visitors arriving at the Lower School site during, or at the close of, the school day. Like many inner city schools City School kept a log book to monitor 'visitors' to the school site. Whilst there was a desire to monitor all visitors, an important cause for concern was the number of older youths coming onto the school site. The log book helped to deter visitors. A senior member of staff could approach visitors and politely ask them whether they required help or, in

some instances, invite them to sign in at the school office.[7]

Because the school site had many entrances, it was not possible within the present study to monitor the visiting phenomenon in a systematic way. Nonetheless my own involvement with 'visitors', both as a Lunch Break Supervisor and in my capacity as a Head of Year, indicated that a high proportion of visitors were Afro Caribbean young people who came to the school site to see 'cousins'.[8]

When the phenomena of visits is considered in this chapter's commentary section, it is acknowledged that it may be closely related to inequalities in employment; the arrival of such visitors at an inner city school site might well reflect discrimination in the labour market in the early years after young people have left school or college. However, in terms of our key purposes, the main point is that the presence of older Afro Caribbean youths around the school site at key times of the school day, and especially at the end of the day, made pupils wary. Furthermore, it is arguable that it was children from other ethnic groups within the school who had the least confidence about this presence.

Section Two

Commentary

This chapter began with a contentious argument when it was claimed that it was possible for individual members of minority ethnic groups to be capable of racialist acts. Verbal abuse of an African pupil by both Afro Caribbean and white pupils was then cited in support of this viewpoint. Consideration of this possibility paved the way for the development of a broader argument which suggested, albeit cautiously, that within the specific micro context of particular schools, pupils drawn from communities which, in terms of the wider outside community were minority groups, possessed the potential to escape from a general experience of domination. They might even possess, it was contended, the potential to act as a dominating force within the pupil social world. A variety of examples were presented to support a tentative claim that it was Afro Caribbean pupils who possessed this power at playground level.

Preliminary Points

Before I examine the primary reasons for this claim, two points need to be highlighted. Firstly, it was noted that children from ethnic minority groups which formed a small share of the overall school population liked to be in the same class as others from the same ethnic group. Secondly, the formation of large ethnically exclusive friendship groupings of older, Year 9, Afro Caribbean boys at playground level was noted.

However, reference to ethnically exclusive groupings was balanced through recognition of the M.A. study's finding that ethnic identity was not a factor which determined access to playground games. Further, pupils' own selection criterion when teams were chosen for

the mixed six-a-side football league, indicated the importance of gender and 'competence' not ethnic identity.

Especial attention was given to gradual evolution of a close, tightly knit group of friends between the second and fourth years - 'The Best Friends', Afro Caribbean boys from classes V, R and J. Though this was by no means the only such grouping in school, particular attention was given to this group because I was their Head of Year for two years and because I also taught all these boys in Year 9. In ethnographic work where ethical considerations preclude the possibility of detailed interviews about an important facet of school life, there is an inevitable risk that a teacher researcher may simply 'read' points of significance into an observed phenomenon, without the possibility of interpretational inadequacies being exposed. Hence it is vital not to read too much into the evolution of friendship groupings like 'The Best Friends'. Teachers do not worry when they see boys or girls forming large single sex groupings during free-time. Is it possible therefore that an alluring parallel argument can be put forward to suggest that there is no reason for teacher concern where children display a preference for forming friendships exclusively within one ethnic group, albeit within a multicultural school? After all, at the very least such clustering may provide an opportunity to reflect upon shared experiences of racism outside school, or upon unfair treatment in the classroom? There is a genuine possibility that young people may in some circumstances form ethnically exclusive friendship networks as a response to racialism both institutional and direct in school.

In the case of'The Best Friends' the evolution of this group may in part have been related to a desire to achieve a degree of autonomy or space, in dealing with staff. By Year 10 these boys had

undoubtedly achieved a greater degree of autonomy from teacher control than many other boys in their year - an autonomy evident, for example, in conspicuously sedate movement from the Upper to the Lower School between lessons. However, it is also important not to lose sight of the fact that in the context of a large inner city comprehensive school, in which aggression between pupils is commonplace, the formation of large ethnically exclusive friendship networks of older boys can all too easily constitute a threat to other pupils. Further, it is arguably within the context of a broader appreciation of power relations at playground level that this phenomenon can best be understood. I therefore now intend to focus upon this point more fully by considering in more detail the signs of the dominance of Afro Caribbean pupils at playground level at City School.

Signs of Domination

In Chart A some of the reasons for believing that Afro Caribbean pupils possessed greater power than children from other ethnic groups in the pupil social world at City School are highlighted. The four identified signs of domination, (i) Mobbing, (ii) Provision of 'back-up', (iii) Open expression of gang allegiance, (iv) Full-site freedom, are then discussed more fully.

CHART A

Sign	Effect
Mobbing	Afro Caribbean pupils capable of mobbing pupils thought to have used racialist terminology. South Asian pupils unable to form mobs in spite of climate of verbal abuse. . White pupils desert any white children who become focus of mob attention.
Provision of 'back-up'	Unfettered availability of older Afro Caribbean pupils to provide support for Afro Caribbean pupils in fights with children from other ethnic groups.
Open expression of gang allegiance	Afro Caribbean pupils able to celebrate and identify with exclusivist Afro Caribbean gangs. No parallel open pattern of expression of allegiances amongst white or South Asian pupils.
Full-site Freedom	Visitors to site to see 'cousins'. Presence of older Afro Caribbean youths at end of school-day. These 'entitlements' exclusively enjoyed by the Afro Caribbean community.

(i) Mobbing

It was suggested that only one ethnic grouping possessed the capacity to form large angry mobs in response to real or alleged racism. How accurate was this? When cussing was examined it was seen that South Asian pupils encountered abuse which commented offensively upon identity. Yet, where South Asian pupils responded to such abuse physically, this response was individualistic, not collective. By contrast, it was seen that an instance of alleged racialist abuse targeted at an Afro Caribbean student resulted in mobbing. An initial reason therefore for believing that only Afro Caribbean pupils possessed the power to form an ethnically exclusive mob of this sort

stemmed from this. There were no occasions when isolated racialist white or Afro Caribbean pupils were attacked by African, Turkish or South Asian pupils, even though these children encountered racialist verbal abuse, a potential trigger of mobbing.

It is important not to make too much of one instance. Yet two related points should be noted. Firstly, inchoate instances of mobbing, moving towards the situation described, occurred on a number of occasions.[8] Secondly, no attempt is being made to situate halos around the necks of racialist white youngsters: these children tended to get what they deserved. Instead the aim is to show that expressions of racism occurred with a specific power context. White pupils who abused Afro Caribbean children faced immediate, and potentially dramatic, difficulties. In contrast, abuse by either white or Afro Caribbean pupils of children from less numerically significant ethnic minority groups caused few ripples within the pupil social world.

Does appreciation that children from some minority groups were not in a position to form mobs raise an important point of qualification about the 'mobbing' phenomenon? In the work of Olweus, mobbing is portrayed as an instantaneous, eruptive occurrence and as one which feeds upon instinct rather than reflection (1978,p. 2). Yet mobbing occurs in specific social contexts and it is vital that sight is not lost of the capacity of children to 'assess' or 'read' their position in a given social context. Further, it may be suspected that, at the heart of any such 'reading' may lie an alertness to the actual division of power within a specific micro context. There was no prospect that South Asian, African or South European pupils would be able to form ethnically exclusive mobs in response to racialism at City School. Further, these children 'knew' their position in the pupil social world.

My subsequent teaching experience, which was in a middle school where over 90% of the children were from South Asian families, provided a further interesting angle in relation to this issue. A much lower overall level of overt physical aggression tended to be evident amongst the 8-12 year old children in this school. However, the few Afro Caribbean pupils in the school sometimes encountered verbal forms of disparagement. This highlights an important point. No veil of sentimentality should be attached to any groups of children because children from all ethnic groups may be capable of displaying extreme unpleasantness within the appropriate 'power setting'.[9]

Above all it is apparent that no veil of sentimentality should surround the actions of white pupils for attention has already been drawn in Chapter 5 to the fact that South Asian pupils tended to be the target of abuse by both white and Afro Caribbean youngsters. An uncomfortable probability is therefore that Afro Caribbean pupils did not encounter verbal abuse from some white pupils merely because white pupils 'understood' the power dynamics at playground level. White pupils had few illusions about what would happen should they channel racialist comment in the direction of Afro Caribbean youngsters and there were, it might be suggested, easier targets for racists. This possibility does not, of course, preclude recognition of the unity in many aspects of white and Afro Caribbean 'style', a factor which also may play an important role in fostering relatively harmonious relations between white and Afro Caribbean pupils?

(ii) Provision of 'back-up'

Foucalt's conception of social life as 'battle' finds a sharp, somewhat literal, point of application when fights or quarrels between children are examined. Further, one of Foucalt's favoured approaches - that of shifting attention away from why questions to how questions - has the potential to be especially illuminative in revealing the

power relations which inform pupil interaction. From this point of view a fundamental issue is: how were quarrels resolved? Exploration of the phenomenon of the provision of 'back-up' has therefore the potential to cast light upon this question.

It appeared that a weighting process could occur in quarrels between Afro Caribbean pupils and children from other ethnic groups at City School. A stark example of this was seen in the fight between Bose and Maureen in the girls' toilets. Here the movement of Bose towards victory, (an unacceptable resolution of the dispute in terms of the underlying micro power structure?) led to the intervention of Maureen's friends. Reflection upon the obverse situation is helpful here. It was most unlikely, if not inconceivable, in the micro context of the school that African girls would have intervened in support of a friend quarreling with an Afro Caribbean pupil. For such a response would simply have invited the possibility of an escalating attack by a broader grouping. The same pattern underpinned the fight between Harvinder (South Asian) and Derek (Afro Caribbean). Here, it will be recalled that Harvinder won an initial fight, but the overall dispute was brought to a close by a second fight in which Harvinder was defeated by Derek's elder brother.

In Chapter 5 it was suggested that some South Asian boys at City School were prepared to contest verbal abuse and the value of defensive allegiances amongst South Asian children (highlighted, for example, by meeting together prior to picking up siblings from Primary School) was also noted. Nonetheless the extent of this collective capacity should not be exaggerated. In this instance, subsequent support by South Asian pupils, following the initial 'fair' fight between Harvinder and Derek, would not have ended the dispute: instead any support would simply have generated a mounting tide of

aggression. Both Bose's and Harvinder's fights are interesting for a further reason. In these instances, the 'power' of Afro Caribbean pupils arose in part from the active 'surveillance' of older Afro Caribbean pupils. But, in addition, a strong element of physical coercion, which involved the active involvement of additional parties came into play and 'resolved' the dispute.

Reflection upon Ian and Philip's experiences raises the possibility that fight avoidance, and not merely the provision of 'back-up', also offers clues about the power structure at playground level. Again it is helpful to consider the obverse situations. At City School there were easy opportunities for Afro Caribbean youngsters to have fights with white pupils whom they were confident they could defeat. Such encounters could be stewarded by older Afro Caribbean boys and therefore there was no reason to be unduly wary about entering into a high intensity fight. However, this option was not open to children from other ethnic groups when involved in fights or quarrels with Afro Caribbean youngsters. Philip and Ian had very real problems and their choice of the truancy option was therefore understandable. It may even have been a 'wise' choice in the circumstances: children rarely share teachers' faith in the capacity of adults to resolve such complex problems.

Ian and Philip were very different characters and through recognition of this a deeper appreciation of some of the potential consequences of variations in the power of specific ethnic groups within the pupil social world may be gained. Ian was a stocky, disenchanted and rather isolated individual with little or no fear of getting into trouble in school, and in other circumstances his response would have been different. Had Ian been hassled by a weaker white or

South Asian pupil he would have responded very differently. He would not have avoided a fight and he would not have truanted.[10] Philip was an altogether different character. He was a boy who would have been most reluctant to fight in any circumstances. Yet he was an even more unlikely truant and the fact that he felt sufficient fear to choose this option is an especial cause of disquiet.

(iii) Expression of gang allegiance

It has already been noted that the emergence of ethnically exclusive friendship networks like 'The Best Friends' deserves consideration within the context of consideration of open expression of gang allegiance. What then, if anything, does this show about the character of ethnic group relations?

Attention was drawn to the fact that 'The Best Friends' included boys with very varying levels of motivation towards formal school goals. Some members of the group, from V class, had excellent work records, whilst group members, from J class, had been involved in sexual harassment. Members from R class had tended to bully other boys in their form. Interestingly during Year 9 (the phase when this group was emerging as a more tightly knit friendship network) there was no evidence that the group in concert bullied other boys or girls. Other boys were,however, increasingly wary of this group and considered them to be amongst the 'hardest' in the year.

I was acutely aware that an interest in groups of this sort could lead in educationally significant research directions which were, unfortunately, outside the core concerns of the study. For example, many parents of Afro Caribbean boys tended to become increasingly concerned as their sons moved through the school that they would become trapped in friendship groupings which were extremely hostile to the whole process of schooling - a factor worthy of consideration, within the context of research focally interested in teasing out

factors offering the possibility of explaining comparative rates of Afro Caribbean male underachievement? For our present purposes, however, the key point is that when seen within the specific micro school context (a context in which mobbing could occur,'back-up' could be provided in the event of fights or quarrels; and above all one in which large 'high profile' groups of white or South Asian boys were conspicuously absent) the evolution of this grouping, with a sharp sense of identity, hinted strongly at the character of power divisions at playground level.

The existence of Chanel's posse, considered in Chapter 7 and briefly mentioned in this chapter introduces, however, a healthy balancing perspective. There was strong evidence that the aggression of this more self consciously self-styled 'posse' was directed at other Afro Caribbean girls just as much, if not more, than at children from other ethnic groups. Thus, in the phase when the posse was most active, targeted pupils included Year 7 girls, (black and white) approached for money; 'swotty' girls, both black and white, hassled in the dining area and Science lesson, and individual Afro Caribbean girls disliked by the 'charismatic' gang leader. It may be important therefore for teachers to recognise that <u>all</u> children, and <u>not</u> merely children from other ethnic groups may be the targets of some groupings who appear on the surface to constitute ethnically exclusive gangs.

The issue of open expression of allegiance to gangs outside school, raises a number of points of interest. It was stressed that my information about these groups was gathered informally and that it was as a consequence sketchy. Nonetheless, it is important to appreciate that this sketchiness actually mirrored quite closely the understanding of many Lower School pupils, for whilst at times these gangs featured within the everyday discourse of sectors of the Lower

School population (with rumours and stories about their activities and exploits being exchanged) many children actually 'knew' very little about them.

Barthes, in 'Myth Today', (1982) demonstrates the abundant possibilities for teasing away at the systems of meaning buried deep within discourses or systems of communication and notes that messages can be conveyed in and through material objects just as through rather more obvious signalling systems. At City School the gangs whose activities, whether mythical or real, formed a topic of conversation and were the playful point of accusation or counter accusation; the gangs whose activities were 'celebrated' in graffiti or through the adoption of wearing a scarf, were invariably Afro Caribbean gangs. Moreover, there was no parallel 'celebration' of the identity of white or South Asian gangs. In an important sense therefore, even though the 'real' knowledge of Lower School pupils about The Down Town Boys and The Crew was sketchy, this open ,or front stage, celebration of their identity 'spoke' of the relative power of Afro Caribbean pupils within the pupil social world. As noted in the data section,there was not, and thankfully could not be, a parallel system of celebration of white, South Asian or African gangs.

The fact that 'A' level Sociology students genuinely knew far more about local gangs was noted. It was seen that conversation about this area arose when discussing the phenomenon of media amplification and the generation of 'moral panics'. The central need to maintain appropriate ethical standards as a teacher has been repeatedly emphasised and it was noted that this concern was paramount when the whole area of race relations was examined. Both because of ethical concerns, and the need to retain school support for the research enterprise, I did not explore possibilities for examining this theme in a more thoroughgoing way. Throughout the core interest of the

present study was in social relations at the Lower School site where the activities, or alleged activities, of external gangs tended to penetrate at a symbolic rather than active level. Nonetheless discussion with 'A' Level pupils (which revealed, perhaps not surprisingly, the possibilities for overlap between older pupils in school and membership of external gangs) showed sharply that there were real possibilities for such gangs to intimidate, hassle or bully other young people.

(iv) Full-site freedom

When an example of mobbing was cited it was stressed that all the children and not merely the physical victim of the attack were 'victims' in this instance. Consideration of the enthusiasm of older Afro Caribbean youths for visiting the school site during the course of the school day, or for hanging around at the close of the day, may also draw attention to another very real way in which members of the Afro Caribbean community are victims of racism, a point touched upon in the data section. Is it possible that a continued enthusiasm for school sites reflects disparate patterns of employment in the post school world? The fact that white and South Asian youngsters did not continue to return to the site, or start to visit a site which they had never actually attended as pupils, might well reflect the greater work opportunities available to young people from these communities. Hence visits to school sites by older Afro Caribbean youths may be a direct consequence of racialism in the post school world.

Whatever the actual explanation for this enthusiasm, it has to be noted that many 'visitors' were not ex pupils of the school.[11] It is important to stress that the presence of older youths may often merely have reflected broader friendship groupings within the Afro Caribbean community. Nonetheless, in an aggressive environment in which disputes at the end of the school day were common, this presence could be

intimidating for all younger children and especially so for children from other ethnic groups. Further, this presence reinforced a feeling that these children were under surveillance.

There was also an important side effect from this presence. At a symbolic level the presence of 'visitors' underlined the capacity of Afro Caribbean pupils to mobilise effective 'back-up' in the case of disputes with children drawn from other ethnic groups in the school. A further consequence of such visits also deserves consideration. On occasions when fights had happened at the end of the school-day, or when pupils were milling around in excitement because of a continuing dispute, teaching staff tended to face an impossible task in persuading pupils to leave the school site. Sometimes the presence of older youths could greatly increase the difficulties staff faced in helping all children to leave the school site in a reasonably settled way. It would, of course, be naive in the extreme to assume that the attendance of such visitors had of necessity nothing to do with the activities of external street gangs. Unfortunately exploration of the nature of this connection, if any, lay outside the scope of the study.

The relationship between the relative power of Afro Caribbean pupils at City School and racism in British Society

It was noted above that Goldman, in 'Towards a Theory of Social Power', places emphasis upon recognising the importance of the issue, or range of issues, in relation to which power is held, when an assessment of the extent or scale of power is made. Further, important issues are perceived to be those which affect the welfare of the individual or group. In Goldman's elaboration of this point, 'welfare' is primarily related to the experience of those whose actions or circumstances are constrained by the possessors of power.

Yet, can it be claimed that this approach also has the potential to cast light upon the actions of those who possess greater power in a given context?

The notion of welfare may help to explain why the types of issues identified here are somewhat different in character from those identified when we focused upon gender. Not surprisingly (given the immense importance of gender in opening or constraining activity possibilities during school-day free-time), it was seen that ethnic identity was not a significant factor affecting the issue of access to 'formal' free-time opportunities whether in the playground or school building. Instead all the 'signs' of domination cited - open expression of gang allegiance, mobbing, full-site freedom and provision of 'back-up' - relate to an altogether different aspect of welfare, and an aspect lying close to the heart of the experience of Afro Caribbean young people making sense of life in a hostile white society.

If appropriate attention is given to the racism and hostility encountered by Afro Caribbean young people outside school, there is an obvious temptation to suggest that there was an intriguing reversal in the experience of Afro Caribbean pupils at City School. Yet when attention is also given to the actual issues in relation to which Afro Caribbean pupils held power, it becomes clear that this argument should not be advanced in too crude or simple a form. For there was no evidence that Afro Caribbean pupils denied other children access to any significant free-time opportunities in school. All (male!) pupils could, for example, play on the playgrounds and there was no other obvious denial of access to other free-time facilities.

Is it possible instead that the issues in relation to which Afro

Caribbean pupils tended to hold power were ones which related to the welfare of Afro Caribbean pupils as a whole? This argument can be advanced by claiming that the phenomenon of mobbing reflected a very understandable determination to ensure that no Afro Caribbean pupils became the victims of racism in school. Much the same can be said about the provision of 'back-up' support in the event of quarrels with pupils from other ethnic groups; the open expression of gang allegiance and the arrival of older youths at the end of the day. All these phenomenon underlined the fact that if or when disputes with other children arose in the micro world of the school Afro Caribbean pupils were 'in control'.

The most alluring feature of this argument is that it has the potential to cast light upon why in the routine ebb and flow of life in the Lower School there were few obvious signs of domination by Afro Caribbean pupils, whereas if quarrels developed the greater relative power of Afro Caribbean pupils became rather more obvious. Whilst the danger that this explanatory route may rapidly become both contrived and convoluted has to be conceded, its core claim can be stated simply and in a way which may have the potential to act as a springboard for helpful reflection upon policy.

The core claim can be stated as follows. There can be a fundamental difference in the experience of children from any ethnic group in and outside school. Outside school Afro Caribbean children constantly encounter racism. However, in the specific micro context of City School, Afro Caribbean pupils possessed the necessary social power to emerge as victors if quarrels with children from other ethnic groups occurred. At City School, Afro Caribbean pupils displayed a determination to support the interests of the collectivity. Further, there was at times a possibility for a misplaced application of this

determination and as a consequence this created, and not merely resolved, problems. An important feature of this argument is, arguably, that it begins to situate the character of pupil interactions at City School within a frame which is structurally alert to the persistence of racism in British Society. In a very real sense there is a potential for all children to become victims of this structural racism, for it generates distrust and generates fresh possibilities for aggression between pupils in school.

In this chapter I have examined which, if any, ethnic group possesses greatest power, and is dominant, at playground level. I have suggested that no ethnic group is dominant in relation to desirable playtime options. However, I have identified the underlying power of Afro Caribbean pupils within the pupil social world. Further, I have suggested that this becomes especially apparent where there is friction with children from other ethnic groups. A number of pointers to this underlying power have been identified. Throughout the chapter I have drawn attention to some of the limitations upon this data used in the formulation of this controversial argument. I have, for example, stressed that it was not possible to counterbalance the process of participant observation through interviews, even though this was desirable.

My concern to identify the power relations which informed pupil interactions where there was friction may have undermined appreciation of a fundamental point. For much of the time relations between children from different ethnic groups were very good indeed. Thus, I noted the preference of many pupils for play with other children from

their own class, irrespective of ethnic group. Yet in this chapter I may also have understated the problems of children from minority ethnic groups with few pupils in the school.[12] It is vital to recognise that these pupils could at times be in a vulnerable position in interactions with both white and Afro Caribbean pupils. Further, some of the underlying difficulties of these children have already been identified in Chapter 5 (Cussing) and Chapter 6 (Fighting).

In this chapter I have suggested that, in the distinctive circumstances of City School, Afro Caribbean pupils ultimately 'possessed' more power than white pupils at playground level. Yet this distinction may be meaningless for pupils from minority ethnic groups with few pupils in the school. Instead their experience could include aggression from children from the two major ethnic groups in the school.

Footnotes

Chapter 9

1. I have no formal figures. Hence this observation is simply based upon my experience of teaching G.C.S.E., C.S.E., 'O' and 'A' level classes over an eight year period.

2. Whenever I raised questions which touched upon this area, I framed my questioning in a way which implied that I believed that race relations were very good.

3. In essence by this term I meant the unifying (cohesion creating?) tendency within the broad culture of childhood which, I felt, made children more alike in a positive way without threatening cultural diversity.

4. 'They'd' means the cusser here.

5. This was a gambling game which involved throwing coins towards a wall. The pupils whose coins settled closest to the wall collected the winnings.

6. I want to stress that I did not have, and do not claim to have, detailed knowledge in this area.

7. 'Visitors' would normally move off the school site at this point.

8. There were also incidents of this kind at the Upper School.

9. Examples were:

   a) muttered comments following a visit to the classroom by an Afro Caribbean pupil delivering a message.

   b) attempts to make jokes at the expense of Afro Caribbean children.

10. Ian was in fact the very aggressive pupil who attacked a new pupil who was waiting outside my office. See Chapter 6 p.127.

11. Employment figures provided by the L.E.A. indicated that a low level of school leavers were fully unemployed. The figures did not however break school leavers down by ethnic group.

12. In other words, South Asian, African and South European pupils.

CHAPTER 10

AGE

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first, data is presented and in the second a commentary upon the data is provided. In the first section, I examine some of the ways in which older pupils are aggressive towards younger children in the Lower School. In the second section I explore the power relations which inform this aggression. At the same time I seek to identify some of the potentially separate age-related effects which may remain hidden where the concept of age grading is prioritised.

Section One

Data

Age grading

The organisational procedure of arranging separate chapters to focus on gender, 'race' and age grading can perhaps be taken to imply belief that age grading like these other areas must of necessity be a site of enduring injustice or unfairness. At the outset it is important to underline that this is not the case. It is fully appreciated that problems associated with age grading are more likely to be transitory, since all children progress through a sequence of school years or age grades and as a consequence enjoy the possibility of benefiting from advantages or opportunities which accrue year by year.

That many pupils begin their secondary school careers aware that they are entering institutions which may be less friendly than their former schools has been demonstrated by Measor and Woods in Changing Schools : Pupil Perspectives on Transfer to a Comprehensive (1984). However, they also point out that some pupils have few, if any, fears (p. 8).

At City School elaborate efforts were made to smooth the process of transfer both through effective Primary/Secondary liaison and through an induction programme. Yet, interestingly, there were comparatively few signs of recognition of the potential for continuing difficulties in the relationship between older and younger pupils during the course of school-day free-time once younger pupils were established in secondary school. No playground was, for example, allocated for the exclusive use of Year 7 pupils, even though the school as a matter of priority situated all Year 7 form rooms in the same part of the school building.

The M.A. study identified a number of features which hinted at the character of the relationship between older and younger pupils at playground level. It became clear, for example, that many Year 7 boys and girls were largely unable to gain access to the three hard surface playgrounds which were monopolised by older Year 8 or Year 9 boys who played football. Instead Year 7 pupils tended to play chasing games in 'out of bounds' areas of the school grounds, along pathways or even in and through the school building. However, a limited number of Year 7 boys broke this general pattern and successfully 'negotiated' involvement in the football games of older boys. It became clear that the roughness of the play of older boys caused distress to younger pupils: Year 7 pupils were, for example, keen to keep out of the way of throwing games like stingball.[1] The study noted the importance of the Lavatory Blocks as a social venue for older Year 9 girls, but did not explore the extent to which this had negative consequences for younger pupils.

Through the programme of interviews in the present research, an opportunity was created to take a much closer look at the relationship between older and younger pupils in the Lower School. Interestingly,

in response to questions which addressed this theme Year 7 pupils were frequently highly animated and spoke with real feeling about their experience. Within the context of group discussion an opportunity also emerged to focus upon why younger pupils were apparently prepared to put up with unfair or aggressive treatment.

Interview responses and data gathered as Head of Year

i) Boys

That the issue of access to the hard surface playgrounds was of considerable significance for Year 7 pupils became abundantly clear in group discussions. Year 7 pupils rapidly learnt that boys from years 8 and 9 claimed the playgrounds (and in particular the sections provided with goal posts) as their own 'territory', and newcomers were therefore highly cautious about putting this claim to the test. The more timid readily, if somewhat fatalistically, accepted the inevitability of this state of affairs. For some adjustment involved no real hardship; thus, for example, Gulfraz talked enthusiastically about mixed games of 'family had' and 'had with no home'[2] - games played in the corridors of the school building and in the 'out of bounds' areas of the school grounds. When asked about whether he would like to play ball games in the playgrounds, Gulfraz reponse displayed some indifference:

> Well we wouldn't mind playing in them but you see the playgrounds always occupied by third years or second years.

Upon being pressed about what would happen if Year 7 pupils attempted to play in the playgrounds Gulfraz speculated:

> Well they may stop us by taking the ball away or just kicking it somewhere else and making us fetch it.

In fact some of his more adventurous classmates could have provided him with a fuller picture of the pitfalls involved in attempting to play ball games in the playgrounds. For example, in conversation with Luke, Graham and Charlie, a discussion which had initially focused upon problems associated with lunchtime activities in the school building developed into a consideration of playground alternatives. The boys pointed out that the opportunity to play free from the intervention of older pupils was by no means guaranteed:

AS:	Could you bring your own football to school and play outside?
Graham:	Once we went off. I brang my football and these two wanted to play, so we came up here (gestures to playground) and they tell us to go away.
Charlie:	Right cos when we're playing they - usually third years and second years - come along and go, 'let us play' and we go, 'no cos we don't want to play with you' and they get all bossy about it.
Luke:	(eager to get in) and they say...
Charlie:	(continued) And they say, 'if you don't want to play get out of the playground' and that stuff.
Luke:	Yeah. Sometimes when you're with them, and we say, 'No'; when we say, 'No' they kick the ball out of the school or things like that.

Younger pupils were then understandably reluctant to play with older pupils since they could simply become the supporting cast in games dominated by their elders. Luke expressed this frustration graphically:

Luke:	And then sometimes you're playing in there with a football and they come along and they ask if they can play and the next minute you've got a whole herd of them.

Graham: Yeah

Luke: And the next thing you don't know what you're doing, and it's just a whole herd of them.

Graham: And then you can't play no more.

Pressure of space necessitated a spirit of compromise amongst all pupils wishing to use the playgrounds. Yet, even if initially approached politely, Year 7 pupils could swiftly find their games hijacked by older children. Furthermore, though Charlie, Luke and Graham were all lively characters, they found, nevertheless, that the play of their elders displayed a tendency to become over physical:

Luke: And you know like it's all third years and you don't want to play with them cos you're trying to do it like with your friends.

Charlie: Cos when they do it they're rough (heavy emphasis).

Luke: They like blaze the ball at you if you know like they got the ball and you say, 'Ah we're going now' and they blaze the ball at you or kick it over the road.

Inevitably only the most robust, or those buffered from rough treatment (for instance, through family connections or sporting links through membership of school teams), remained undeterred by these experiences. Therefore older pupils were regularly able to assert, or reassert, their dominance of the hard surface playgrounds.

That Year 7 boys could make a fairly shrewd assessment both of their range of options and of their relative power became clear in discussion with older Year 9 pupils. For example, in conversation with Ben and his friends, I focused upon the question of what would happen if Year 7 boys attempted to set up a game of football in the 'best' playground' (that

is, the playground which also served as a thoroughfare to the Upper School).

AS:	What would happen if a lot of first year boys went onto the playground and started playing there?
Ben:	They'd get kicked out (laughter from all the boys in the group).

In essence it appeared that Year 9 boys tended to use younger boys in an instrumental way. When short of a ball they would commandeer a ball or gatecrash a game involving Year 7 pupils; when short of players they would let younger boys play. However, they did not feel that any great injustice was involved in this situation. Their attitude was based upon a historical perspective: the experiences of the current crop of Year 7 pupils was, after all, no different than their own experience two years earlier. Thus the access of younger pupils to the playgrounds could vary in a way which reflected the whims of older children. Further, the number of younger children in the playground could ebb and flow daily depending upon whether more or less third years decided to go out or stay on site during a particular lunch break.

ii) Girls

Discussion so far has relied heavily upon the observations of younger boys. What about girls? It was clear that they like boys of their age enjoyed the opportunity to play chasing or ball games during free-time. Yet sadly they also adjusted quickly to the realities of secondary school life. Janet and Agatha explained that they did not like lunch break and pointed out that if they brought a ball it would be 'nicked'. Another group of Year 7 girls, Paula, Louise, Dianna, Meryl and Gemma soon learnt that their chasing games must never spill

over onto the hard surface playgrounds:

Dianna:	And sometimes when we're playing and they're (i.e. other participants in the game) getting us to had us we just run in the cage.
AS:	So you might run in there occasionally but you don't stop in there and play.
All:	Yeah
AS:	Which boys stop you playing in there? Is that first year boys or older boys?
All:	Older
Dianna:	Third
Gemma:	Second and third years, they go,'move out of the way cos the balls going to hit you and it won't be our fault cos you won't move out.'

Dianna added one possible explanation of why it was older boys not older girls who disrupted their play:

> Most of them sometimes go down to the shop and they don't come back till the end of playtime.

Chronic overcrowding could, on busy days, when a large proportion of the 540 Year 7 - Year 9 pupils chose to remain on site, lead to quarrels in other parts of the school grounds in addition to the hard surface playgrounds. Many pupils enjoyed playing patball.[3] In discussion a group of Year 8 pupils, Robin, Barry, Naveed, Jacob and Shabhan, complained that from time to time Year 9 pupils would push them off from their chosen patch even though they had arrived first. When pressed they explained this process more fully:

AS: How would they push you off? Would they hit you or say go away?

Robin: Say, 'Go away' and just start playing there and if you keep playing where you are they say, 'I'm going to beat you up you burk'.

AS: I see. Have you found that Barry? Does that happen from what you have seen or is Robin exaggerating that sort of thing?

Barry: No. If you're playing squash against the wall and they come over and say, 'Hoi I was here first' and we was here first you can see we was here first and they go, 'No you weren't' and they go, 'Move out the way or we'll beat you up'.

AS: Do they do that? But they don't really mean that they wouldn't beat you up. It's just a threat.

Barry: Just a threat to get you out the way.

AS: If it's just a threat why do you choose to move?

Barry: Just in case.

Lavatory Blocks

Teachers quite understandably tend to treat requests to go to the toilet during lesson time with scepticism. The temptation to snatch a few minutes away from boredom proves too strong for some pupils and most, if not all, teachers have to develop strategies to field such requests. Yet is it unfair to assume that all requests to escape from classrooms during lessons reflect an impish spirit? Such an assumption may only be valid in an environment where pupils have unrestricted access to the Lavatory Blocks during free-time. This was not apparently always the case at City School.

It had already become clear during work on the M.A. study that the Lavatory Blocks tended to play an important role in the social life of some older girls since the Lavatory Blocks were important places for older girls to meet, chat and have a smoke. Unfortunately

their presence could, at times, be rather threatening, and younger girls could feel wary and cautious even when there was no intention to cause distress. For example, Nora, a pupil in Year 9, reflected on her experiences in her first year in secondary school.

> Well when we were first years right we used to go in the toilets and see a big group of third years and be sort of like scared to go in there in case they sort of bullied us but they never did.

Later in the same conversation Nora pointed out that she herself now used the Lavatory Blocks as a meeting place and her friend Dana was aware that they were now experiencing the opposite side of the same encounter.

> Dana: We don't want to go in there. It's just the same thing cos when we're in the toilets (cos we ain't got nowhere to go so we sit in the toilets sometimes and just talk) and some of the first years come in and see us and just run out...

Undoubtedly, the tendency for older girls to treat these areas as their own territory could, on occasions, be a considerable nuisance for girls in Year 7. For example,Dianna outlined one such instance:

> Me and my friends was going in the toilets and they were blocking it cos they were going, 'You can't come in, go in, you can't go in. There's something happening'. They don't let you in until its finished sometimes. The girls smoke in there and when you go in there it's all smoke.

Fears about entry to the Lavatory Blocks may lead to requests to go to

these areas during lesson time. This was hinted at by Nancy and Vivian, two Year 8 pupils. They talked about their reluctance to enter the Lavatory Blocks at break or lunch time and explained that they would sometimes make their way over to the Upper School site in order to use the facilities in a quiet annexe. Vivian also explained her alternative strategy.

> Sometimes in between, in lessons, say, 'Miss can I go to the toilet?' when you know nobody's going to be there.

Some girls gained confidence through visiting the Lavatory Blocks as part of a group. Meryl, for example, explained.

> If I want to go the toilets I go with my friend like I've always got someone with me.

The general resilience of pupils such as Meryl should not, however, create any illusions about the potential for younger pupils to feel intimidated when visiting the Lavatory Blocks. This point was made particularly clearly as a group of quiet Year 9 girls recalled their experiences when in Year 7:

Sophie:	Yeah cos there used to be a whole lot of third years and I used to go out of the toilets and say I didn't want to go. Because she (Joyce) used to say, 'Oh come on' and I just didn't want to go.
Joyce:	Yeah I know.
Fiona:	You'd go in there and then sort of laughter and everything.
Sophie:	And they'd listen to you going to the toilet.
Joyce:	Silence.

Sophie: And as soon as you'd come out they'd be going (Sophie points) 'eeeeeeeeeeeerrrrrrrrrrrrrrr.'

All: Niagra falls

Melissa: And when you'd walk in they'd sort of....

Fiona: Stare at you, look you up and down and go, 'Oh Gawd what does she look like?'

Queues

Teaching staff were aware of the potential for difficulty whenever pupils were required to queue. A relatively effective lunch rota whereby each school year took turns to have lunch first limited this problem in the dining hall. Nevertheless, with varying degrees of success, groups of Year 9 pupils attempted to sneak in early on days when they were required to eat late.

The queues for the break-time tuck shop were, however, more easily dominated by older children. Here there was no rota and, in addition, the level of staff supervision was, of necessity, low (or was hindered by late staff arrival). Sometimes it would end with a small line of sad and angry Year 7 pupils waiting to be served. There was in fact no immediately obvious solution to this problem (short of shutting the tuck shop down completely). Any attempt to introduce a rota would, it was felt, encourage the tendency for pupils to place 'orders' via those further ahead in the queue. The situation was obviously frustrating for the more fragile Year 7 pupils who could, on occasion, find themselves pushed towards the back in a frantic scramble for service. Although constantly interrupting one another, Janet and Agatha expressed some of this frustration in a discussion of the general problem of queues. Their observations highlighted also an interesting difference in the 'style' of older boys and girls:

Agatha: Well like the lunch queue everybody's pushing in and that.

Janet:	Yeah cos they want their dinner.
Agatha:	And at break time.
Janet:	It's not.
Agatha:	All the third years.
Janet:	Push in.
Agatha:	Push in and act silly.
AS:	So the older ones tend to push in do they?
Agatha:	And by the time you get there it's time go go in.
Janet:	And they say, 'Oi oi I'll give you the money and you can buy me the thing.'
AS:	And would it be older girls that asked you that or older boys?
Agatha:	It's mostly older girls. Yeah cos the boys push in a lot.
Janet:	Yeah they can't be bothered to ask. They push.

In the school building

An admirable feature of school life was the policy of permitting form groups to use tutor bases during the lunch break. However, a minority of Year 9 pupils prevented younger pupils taking advantage of the opportunities provided by this progressive policy. Whilst a form tutor I gained an interesting insight into one difficulty - that of older pupils monopolising or taking over equipment brought into school by younger children.

Members of my Year 8 tutor group took to playing table tennis during the lunch hour and brought in their own table tennis bats to play on rearranged desks, but unfortunately soon after this pastime became popular Year 9 pupils started to visit the tutor base. This room was also my teaching base and during the lunch hour I would often go there in order to sort out work ready for afternoon lessons. Not

unusually I would find Year 9 boys hogging the table tennis tables (desks rearranged for the duration of the lunch break) watched by glum Year 8 pupils.

I interviewed a number of members of my former tutor group during the interview phase of the research and two members explained what tended to happen:

Stuart: Normally they just come in and kick two people off, just take the bat and start playing.

Adrian: They reckon that they're brilliant at table tennis. They just say, 'go on then' and they just play and don't come off. I generally just usually end up walking out of the classroom.

In terms of the rough and tumble of school life this situation clearly involved no great hardship and obviously all pupils were fortunate to be able to make use of the school building during the lunch hour. Yet an irony must be noted. In part younger pupils were keen to use facilities in the building for an activity of this sort because older pupils dominated facilities outside. Equally, the school was keen for responsible use to be made of the building because of overcrowding outside. Hence it was particularly unfortunate that younger pupils' participation in constructive alternative activities in the school building was disrupted by older students. The attitude of members of my form to disruption of their table tennis games was essentially one of stoical acceptance and not unnaturally the intervention of physically bigger Year 9 children was allowed to go unchallenged: the whim of a few Year 9 pupils could therefore bring to a halt the activities of a larger group of younger children.

The relationship between Lower School pupils and older youths from outside school

The relationship between pupils in the Lower School and older youths from outside school was not formally explored within the study. From time to time, however, interesting glimpses emerged of ways in which older youths could act as an unhelpful influence upon pupils in the Lower School. At times, for example, older youths would hang around school at the end of the day and their presence could aggravate quarrels. A fight between Harvey and Younis, two boys in Year 9, serves as an illustration.

One afternoon these classmates started cussing each other in lesson and other members of their form stirred up the quarrel sufficiently to ensure that the boys agreed to fight after school. Somewhat reluctantly, since neither boy had much of a taste for fighting, the boys set into one another. Younis rapidly emerged as the 'victor' and the boys stopped fighting. Unfortunately, however, two older youths with no connection with the school, who at that time regularly hung around the Lower School at the end of the day, were watching. They forced the boys to fight once again for their own entertainment! As a consequence the fight continued in the presence of a large audience of pupils and spilled over into the gardens of some local houses until a resident emerged and broke up the fight.

Coincidentally Mrs Grant, Harvey's mother, had already made an appointment to see me in the week of this fight to talk about a recent morning when Harvey had in a highly conspicuous, and most uncharacteristic way, truanted from school. When we met we therefore discussed both Harvey's fight with Younis and his own truancy. Harvey's truancy had in fact ended in a somewhat bizarre way. One morning at 10 to 12 (that is, just before the end of morning lessons) Harvey

openly wandered into school accompanied by an older youth. Stephen, the older youth, was a near full-time non-attender on the pupil roll of a neighbouring school. He regularly visited City School at times when he should himself have been at his own school.

Discussion which initially just involved Mrs Grant, offered an intriguing example of how a pupil could develop problems through close association with older youths. Mrs Grant claimed that Stephen was a 'bad influence' and felt that Harvey's behaviour had deteriorated since they had become 'friends'. She also pointed out that on a number of occasions Stephen had visited their home and had 'borrowed' some of Harvey's possessions, including his walkman. Despite her pressure, Harvey had been unable to get these items back. In subsequent discussions, in which Harvey was included, it became abundantly clear that he was very scared of his somewhat intimidating associate and that he was keen to detach himself from this 'friendship'. Equally, it was clear that Harvey did not know how he could do this and that he had even fewer ideas about how he could secure the return of his walkman and other missing posses ions. Quite clearly it would be highly misleading to make too much of this one incident. Nonetheless, it is perhaps important to recognise the possibility that some of the Year 9 pupils who dominate younger children in the Lower School may be pushed around themselves in contexts where they come into contact with older youths from outside school.

Yet recognition of this possibility should not lessen appreciation of the fundamental point that within the Lower School older pupils from Year 9 tended to dominate children from Year 7 or 8. Further, it was clear that younger children did not enjoy the experience of being 'pushed around'. Whilst younger pupils could creatively adapt to some forms of denial - for example, playing happily in 'out of bounds' areas of the school grounds if unable to

gain access to the playgrounds - other processes were more obviously upsetting. Thus, it was invariably upsetting if older children took games equipment or approached seeking to borrow money. Equally, no Year 7 or Year 8 children enjoyed being 'bossed around' and they rarely, if ever, enjoyed 'giving' tuck to older children. Thus Danny, a Year 8 pupil observed:

> They bully the second years quite a bit. Cos some people, say you've just opened a bag of crisps and they call you over and take them all. They don't mean to - well they do - but they take a handful and someone else takes it. Or they might make you go and get an ice cream. They give you the money but its still, you don't want to do it, but you've got no choice.

Furthermore, as we have seen within this section, during the course of school-day free-time younger pupils could face moments of aggression, frustration, irritation or even on occasion more overt bullying as they came into daily contact with older children from Year 9.

Section Two

Commentary

Where the present study has examined the way individuals have been treated by groups, some rather dramatic and highly unpleasant examples of bullying have been recorded. For example, in Chapter 7 the way in which Tessa was bullied by children who visited her home when she was absent from school was identified. This chapter's examination of the broader relationship between children from different school age grades has not revealed dramatic examples of this kind.

However, no room for complacency about the relationship between children in different age grades has emerged. The chapter has repeatedly indicated that children from junior age grades may have their activities during school-day free-time disrupted by older children; equally we have seen that younger children may, in an almost routine way, be slighted or inconvenienced when they come into contact with children from higher age grades. Most seriously of all, the chapter has shown that younger pupils have to be ever watchful and constantly alert to the fact that older, more powerful, children cannot always be trusted.

Key signs of the dominance of older children

Many factors pointed to the greater power of older pupils in the Lower School. Important 'signs' of the disparity in the power of older and younger children also reveal the low level of bullying which was an almost routine feature of pupil life during school-day free-time. These signs (older pupils control of playground space and indoor play facilities and younger pupils' obedience and restricted activity choices) are summarised in Chart A.

CHART A

Sign	Elaboration
Control of playground space	Older pupils (boys) monopolise the most desirable play areas. Older pupils (boys) remove younger boys and girls from desirable play areas. Older pupils (boys) interfere in the leisure activities of younger children.
Control in other areas	Older pupils (overwhelmingly boys) able to remove younger pupils from chosen leisure activities in classrooms. Younger pupils reluctant to enter their own common rooms when older children present. Younger girls wary about entering Lavatory Blocks when older girls present.
Activity 'choices'	Younger pupils reluctant to bring games equipment to school. Many pupils avoid the hard surface playgrounds and instead opt for chasing games in 'out of bounds' areas of the school grounds.
Obedience	Younger pupils play games as instructed by older children. Older pupils request and take sweets from their juniors. Younger pupils carry out favours. Older pupils jump position in the tuck shop queue.

I have already acknowledged that age grading differs in a fundamental way from other potential sources of injustice in school; all pupils are aware that with the passage of time they gain any available advantages or privileges linked to age grade membership. Moreover, pupils arrive in school having already experienced this process for Year 7 pupils have already been in the most junior and most senior grades in Primary School. It is tempting therefore to assume that younger pupils do not resent the fact that older children may, in a range of contexts, secure desired options or advantages.

Equally it is tempting to assume that younger pupils are quite happy to accept the authority of older children.

However, the data did not merely provide support for this somewhat complacent perception. For example, younger pupils genuinely wanted to play in the playgrounds, but consideration of the experiences of Luke, Paula, and Robin's friendship groups illustrated the problems which younger pupils who tried to establish games in desirable play areas could encounter.

The playground dominance of older boys rested ultimately upon a willingness to utilise physical aggression. Yet most of the time the mere threat of aggression was sufficient to secure outcomes desirable from their point of view. The fears of younger pupils (fears nurtured in part through the self consciously rough play of older boys) were usually sufficient to ensure compliance without the 'kicking out' to which Ben referred[4] becoming literal. Reference to the experience of Robin and his friends appeared to illustrate the operation of a cautionary, 'safety first' policy. For example, it was seen that in response to a threat younger pupils would (in the words of Barry, one of the group) move, 'just in case' the threat was actually carried out. Further, the need to act in a way which took into consideration the potential of older pupils to behave aggressively was a factor which constantly constrained the breaktime options and choices of younger pupils.

Both the capacity older boys displayed to gain control of desired play space and the ability they displayed to retain this control testified to their power relative to other children in the Lower School. It was depressingly obvious that older boys also assumed an entitlement to secure that which was most attractive to themselves. In this there was an intriguing mirroring of gender relations for in Chapter 8 we saw that boys of all ages tended to make this assumption

when in contact with girls. Given the central importance of gender divisions in the pupil social world, it was of course far from surprising that it was older boys, not older girls, who dominated the playgrounds.

That the issue of access to Lavatory Blocks was of greater significance for girls than boys, became clear in group interviews. Interview responses of girls from all three years indicated that older girls dominated these areas. However, it would be misleading to equate this directly with the playground domination of older boys. Year 9 girls denied that they actively set out to prevent Year 7 girls gaining access to Lavatory Blocks, whereas older boys readily claimed that they dominated or controlled younger boys. For example, Nora pointed out that Year 7 girls were sometimes afraid without good reason: she noted, furthermore, that in her first year she had also been afraid to go into the toilets, although she had never been bullied. Her friend Dana (who also used the main Lavatory Block as a place for a lunchtime chat) also suggested that younger girls tended to leave unnecessarily.

An obvious problem remains, however. Why were younger girls afraid? Further, why, if the more general experience of younger girls in the Lower School was one devoid of manipulation, did younger girls feel afraid in this context? The Lavatory Blocks were areas which were largely free of close adult supervision and were also the places where girls who wanted to smoke tended to go during break or lunchtime. The combination of lack of close adult supervision and the assemblage of older girls for a deviant activity may clearly have helped to create a climate of fear. Further, the desire to be wary in any encounters with older girls may also reflect prior experience in primary school. That is, previous consecutive experiences of being both the 'small' and the 'big' girls

in school. Equally this caution may be linked to the myths which surround the whole process of transition to secondary school: is it mere coincidence that a common myth about transfer suggests that older pupils stick the heads of Year 7 pupils down toilets?[5]

Through attention to the superficially trivial question of access to the Lavatory Blocks, the disparity in the power of younger and older girls becomes clear. Further, in considering this point, it is important to dismiss the notion that this was a trivial issue. For instance, Lloyd, in 'Lassies of Leith talk about bother' (1993), notes the significance for many secondary girls of school Lavatory Blocks as a sanctuary in which to create their own 'leisure' and as a place apart from boys and staff.

Foucalt's concept of surveillance is especially appropriate in understanding how older girls maintained control of these valued areas in which to create a sense of space and autonomy. The wary approach of younger girls was based upon recognition that older girls could pose a real, not an imaginary, threat. The comments of Sophie and her friends demonstrated sharply that at times younger girls felt threatened and uncertain. They could encounter staring, teasing and direct comments which evaluated and belittled their appearance. Hence it was not surprising that some Year 7 girls preferred to go the Lavatory Blocks during lessons when the toilets were more likely to be deserted.

The existence of a power relationship here becomes apparent when we reflect upon the obverse situation. Would Year 7 girls have been able to deny girls from Year 9 access to the toilet blocks? Equally, would Year 7 girls have been able to subject Year 9 girls to teasing without fear of reprisal? The answer to both these questions is a clear 'no': an answer which would almost certainly be mirrored in most, if not

all schools.

Because I have drawn attention to the Lavatory Block dominance of older girls, as well as the more general playground dominance of older boys, there is a temptation to suggest that these children were equally powerful and that they simply had separate spheres of influence. This temptation should, however, be resisted. The dominance of older boys was an altogether more pervasive feature of pupil life during school-day free-time. Further, it would be a mistake to equate the older girls' control of Lavatory Blocks through surveillance with the rather more overt physical threat posed by older boys in the playgrounds. It is arguable that older boys possessed a more formidable battery of powers, for we have already seen that older boys could use forms of surveillance (for example, the contemptuous evaluation of performance) when securing desired options from younger boys and all girls. There were no signs that this approach was used by older girls in their dealings with younger boys.

In understanding the varied settings in which older boys and girls could dominate younger children, it is important to recognise another highly significant power. Irrespective of the location or setting, older children could appeal to, and manipulate, a discourse of 'entitlement'. Wherever older pupils secured the best for themselves, they were merely exercising a 'right' which all Lower School pupils would in turn enjoy.

Although boys and girls from Year 7 tended to find themselves at the rear of queues for the Tuck Shop, this did not simply reflect the actions of older children. It is important therefore to recognise that pupils from Year 7 were less skilled operators at a secondary level and were more liable to make mistakes about the available time. Nonetheless, the greater power of older pupils became obvious when the arrival of the duty teacher was delayed. Under supervision older

pupils had to try to persuade those already established in advanced positions to buy for them: when the duty teacher was late they could simply push in! It would be absurd to suggest that no Year 7 or Year 8 pupils tried to employ this technique. They did. The point is, however, that older children enjoyed a much stronger possibility of success.

In such queues the relative power of older children was seen at its crudest. Here the greater power of older children did not simply derive from a right which accrued with age. Instead the tuck shop queue was ultimately an arena for the manifestation of stark physical power: thus the biggest and oldest enjoyed the best prospects of gaining service.

I am not fully convinced that Janet's observations identify a real difference in the style of older boys and girls in the queue.[6] A much fuller exploration of the phenomenon of queueing than the research was able to offer would be required to test out the accuracy of this claim. Is it possible that her comments simply provide a trigger expression of the types of differences between boys and girls which commonly find expression through the school curriculum?

The tuck shop queue provided, however, an interesting example of the dominance of older children. It showed that both boys and girls could dominate their juniors at the same time. Further, it indicated some of the pressures which could develop in a highly artificial (though not untypical) school situation.

The work of the Opies (1977, 1969, 1985) has played an important role in opening out the rich, creative, infinitely variable world of play enjoyed by children in their pre-adolescence years. An appreciation of this creative potential makes the analysis of power relations more complex because it raises the possibility that the absence of younger children from the hard surface playgrounds does not

inevitably reflect the aggression or bullying of older children. An important task within the present study was therefore to assess the balance between 'push' and 'pull' factors in shaping the break time choices of younger children.

Year 7, and to a lesser extent, Year 8 pupils were undeniably removed from the main hard surface playgrounds at times when this suited older boys. However, for some activity choices favoured by these children (and in particular chasing games) the main hard surface playgrounds had limitations. Much more pleasure was to be derived from chasing along the corridors and up and down the stairways in the main teaching block. Not least amongst the pleasures which this offered was the opportunity to 'wind up' the lunch time supervisors charged with the impossible task of 'policing' the building! Equally, chasing and hiding games in other 'out of bounds' areas, in the school grounds near the bins, or by the oil storage tanks, had an obvious appeal. Whilst therefore some Year 7 and Year 8 pupils were 'pushed off' the main playgrounds, others were pulled away by the lure of alternative highly pleasurable activities elsewhere. Appreciation of this is important because it shows that the failure of Year 7 children to occupy the playgrounds did not simply reflect the social and physical power of older children in the school.

Is it possible that some Year 9 pupils tended to see younger pupils as essentially 'fair weather' users of the playgrounds? Did older pupils (and in relation to the playgrounds we are, of course, talking about older boys) feel that they had a more legitimate claim to playground space because they were consistent and constant users of the hard surface play areas - boys, in other words, who would not easily be lured away to play 'he' in the school corridors? This may, however, be misleading rather than illuminative since it diverts attention from the key question: what did younger pupils actually

want to do? The answer to this question is in fact clear. In an ideal world many Year 7 and Year 8 pupils would have preferred to spend their lunch breaks playing ball games of one sort or another in the playgrounds. But younger pupils did not enjoy 'full-site freedom' and could not play where they wanted. For many therefore chasing games in and around the school were simply the best available option.

Unrestricted freedom to bring items required for play into school was also an important aspect of this autonomy. Yet we saw that younger children were reluctant to bring any games equipment into school because balls brought into school could be 'borrowed'. Actual fear of permanently losing equipment may not have been the most important factor in dissuading Year 7 from bringing equipment. Instead it is possible that mere abuse of equipment had the greatest deterrent effect. There was no point in regularly bringing a ball into school if older pupils were going to treat it as their own. This reluctance to bring games equipment into school (a reluctance far removed perhaps from the pleasure with which balls or bats are taken into some primary schools?) speaks of the fundamental division in power between children from different age grades in the Lower School. There was no possibility that younger pupils would take, 'borrow', or abuse equipment belonging to older children.

It is important that I express a reservation about the final suggested 'sign' of the power of older children - obedience to instructions. As a Head of Year, I never received complaints from pupils who were upset because older children were requiring them to do favours in the very active sense of carrying out commands. My occupational role did not therefore provide evidence which confirmed or supported Danny's claim that at times younger children were required to carry out tasks. Danny's example (that of buying on behalf of an older pupil at the ice cream van) is therefore, perhaps,

exceptional, unless, of course, children who were 'willing' to perform tasks were also reluctant to complain to staff.

Even though younger children did not necessarily obey in the very active sense of performing errands for older children,there were many other signs of a general willingness to obey. Younger pupils in advanced positions in queues readily assisted by purchasing for their elders when instructed; older children rarely, if ever, assisted younger children in this way. Year 7 pupils regularly 'gave' sweets to older children, but there were few signs that sweets flowed in the opposite direction. Year 7 pupils allowed older children to join their games and were even prepared to follow the instructions of older pupils who had 'hi-jacked' their games. Yet it is questionable whether younger children ever joined in the games of their seniors without express invitation.

The study was not in a position to explore the relationship between Lower School pupils and pupils in Years 10 and 11 based at the Upper School site. Whilst some Year 9 pupils clearly had problems with older children (whether arbitrarily as in the case of the fight between Younis and Harvey,or through unsatisfactory 'friendships'),the limited data of the study did not provide a foundation for imposing a 'neat' interpretation - a theory, for example, claiming that the 'dominators' in the Lower School are, somewhat ironically, the dominatees in other contexts. However, in relation to our primary concern, - the Lower School - this is not a surprising point. At the overcrowded Lower School, where Year 9 were the 'big kids', there were numerous potential points of conflict. And, in this specific context, if frustrations developed because of delays or through concern about access,it was far from surprising that it was older, Year 9,pupils who tended to secure advantages. Moreover,there were obvious signs that at times the activities of these children went well beyond a mere

assumption of entitlement and involved a more active manipulation of the youngest pupils on the site.

Different age-related effects?

In the course of interviews there was inevitably a tendency to frame questions in a way which implicitly assumed that only one age-related effect made a significant impact upon the pupil social world - the organisational placement of children born in calendar years (September - August) in school years or grades. Because of the lack of an established corpus of research which explores the impact of age grading upon pupil social relations, this assumption was not altogether surprising. Yet was it too crude? There is clearly a danger that largely independent age-related effects may be blurred or left obscured as a result of this assumption.

Some of the largely separate age-related effects in evidence were: the initial settling in difficulties of Year 7 pupils in the early months after secondary transfer; difficulties which relate to the process of maturation (for example, the capacity of the 'sophisticated' to ridicule the less wordly wise); the problems of small children when in contact with bigger pupils; the difficulties of pupils with birthdays late in the school year (for example, August or July) in dealing with children who are in the same school year, but are considerably older; and, finally, difficulties in the general relationship between pupils from different age grades at playground level. The primary intention was to learn about this final area of difficulty, an area of interest which resembles in an intriguing way anthropological research which examines the relationship between age grades in age class systems. Bernardi (1985) details a number of typical features of such systems: the dependency of power, status, rights and responsibilities upon position within the series of age grades (p. 28); the absence of individual movement between grades

because transition occurs at the appropriate time for movement for the entire grade (1985,p.34).

Many of the identified features of pupil social life appeared to create interesting echoes of such arrangements. Older pupils, for example, tended to assume that they had a variety of 'entitlements' to superior facilities. Is it possible, however, that both the gaining and retention of such entitlements was rather more obviously intertwined with the exercise of power than in age class systems? Whilst power can, as Lukes stresses, (1986,p. 2) be exercised in the absence of apparent conflict, the fact that younger children were prepared to attempt to contest the power of their elders (for example, the initial attempts of Year 7 children to play on playgrounds) is noteworthy. Is it possible that this shows an important distinction between the relationship between pupils from different age grades in school and the relationship between age grades in societies whose social structure is framed around an age class system?

In a real age class system 'entitlements' are accorded a formal legitimacy whereas no such assumption can be made about privileges held by other children within the pupil social world. Instead the right to play games using the equipment of younger children, the 'right' to secure the best playground space and the 'right' to congregate in Lavatory Blocks hinge both upon the crude exercise of physical power (and fears about this capacity) and the capacity to unsettle younger children by placing them under surveillance.

In Changing Schools (1984) Measor and Woods show how during their first months in secondary school many pupils adjust, find their feet and begin to feel at home. However, they also recognise that some pupils may also experience greater transitional

difficulties. Undoubtedly some of the responses of Year 7 informants in the present study related to these distinctive transitional experiences. Yet, for our present purposes the key point is that at times Year 7 pupils framed their courses of action in a way in which showed appreciation of the power of older children. Thus, Janet and her friends abandoned their initial pattern of play, whilst Luke and his friends also changed their activities. Moreover, even if the problems encountered in Year 7 pupils were 'transitional' difficulties, they were, nonetheless, difficulties which persisted for a considerable period of time. The interviews in which they discussed their initial and continuing problems so vividly occurred during Summer Term in their first year at City School.

It can of course be extremely dangerous to accept informants views as 'truth'. In the present study the risk of this was acute when the interview responses of Year 7 pupils were examined because I was never Head of Year 7. As a consequence, I did not have access to data gathered in this capacity which could assist in making a balanced assessment of their observations. However, my own experience as a form tutor of a Year 7 class had indicated that Year 7 pupils rarely complained about the obvious surface signs that they were dominated by older children. Instead they tended to channel their energies during leisure time in creative and innovative directions. It was therefore particularly interesting that such a strong undercurrent of resentment emerged when younger children were interviewed.

Problems which related to maturation or the clash of the 'sophisticated' and the less worldly wise were perhaps most obviously seen in the interview responses of girls when subject to evaluatory surveillance in the toilet blocks. Although in part linked to age grading, it might be suspected that here it was maturation (as

communicated through visible surface signs) which was the real point at issue. There was, moreover, an interesting echo of a theme recurrently identified when cussing was examined - a contemptuous interest in dress or appearance. However, just like cussing, it was obvious that surveillance possessed a capacity to distress or unsettle:

Amy:	And when you'd walk in they sort of...
Fiona:	Stare at you, look you up and down and go, 'Oh Gawd what does she look like?'

The difficulty which arises in ethnographic research when an attempt is made to specify specific age-related effects is arguably well illustrated when attention is focused upon queues. I have already suggested that here greater physical size could prove to be advantageous. However, whilst it is clearly fair to assume that on the whole this works to the advantage of Year 9 pupils, there were clearly great variations in the size of individual pupils from each age grade. A much more thorough and systematic observation of queues than the present study provided would be required therefore in order to establish the independent effects of calendar age, physical size and age grade membership.

An awareness that one potentially important age-related effect lay entirely untapped emerged during the present study. The twelve month gap in the age of some pupils within the same age grade leads to considerable developmental variations amongst children in the same school year. There is an intriguing possibility that an appreciation of the relationship between differences in maturation, size or sophistication could help to cast light upon some patterns of cussing or bullying within school years. Is it possible, in other words, that

the 'dominance' evident in the relationship between Year 9, Year 8 and Year 7 pupils may also be replicated in the relationship between children in the same age grade? For instance, is it possible that children with birthdays towards the end of school years tend to be disproportionately the target of cussing which highlights 'delayed' development or lack of 'sophistication'?

In this chapter I have examined the broad relationship between children from different school years. Whilst few stark examples of bullying have emerged in considering this theme, the aggression of older children has been seen to secure desirable options. Furthermore I have shown that younger children have to make adjustments in their activity choices in order to take into account the actions of older pupils.

It has become clear that older pupils possess a formidable range of powers capable of overcoming any resistance. The greater physical power of older children is in some circumstances of central importance and this was a constant background factor in the interactions of older and younger children. Yet the social dimension to the power of older children must also be fully acknowledged. It is when acting in concert with their 'sophisticated' peers that older children can secure desirable play opportunities. Further, the sharp perception younger pupils have of the power of their seniors is itself an important resource which older children can manipulate and use to their own advantage. Finally, older pupils can make effective use of their greater experience and sophistication to achieve, and preserve, their dominance in relation to desirable options in the Lower School.

Consideration of the relationship between pupils from different school age grades draws to a close this study's examination of pupil

interaction during school-day free-time at City School. Part Three, the final section of this study, contains two chapters. In Chapter 11 I outline the main conclusions of the research. Finally, in Chapter 12 I examine the main policy implications of the study.

Footnotes

Chapter 10

1. A game of 'he' in which someone becomes 'on it' when hit by a tennis ball.

2. Varieties of chasing games which involved several people being 'on it' at once.

3. A game rather like squash which involved hitting a tennis ball with the flat of the hand onto a limited area of wall.

4. op cit p.254.

5. Measor and Woods (1984) p. 20.

6. op cit p.261.

PART THREE

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSIONS

This chapter is divided into two sections. Firstly I focus upon the teacher researcher and identify theoretical influences upon the study. Secondly, I note key points made in the course of the research.

Section One

The position of the teacher researcher

In Chapter 4, I drew attention to the length of time I taught at City School. I worked there for nine years (a period which included a one year sabbatical whilst working for an M.A. degree and one term's paternity leave). Whilst the research reflected long term immersion in the life of the school, I stressed that data for the study was gathered during my final four years at City School. Even though ethnographic studies by teacher researchers may be especially susceptible to the problem of subjectivity, long term immersion may be valuable when policy ideas are examined. At the very least this leads to an appreciation that there are rarely easy solutions to complex, even intractible, problems. Furthermore long term work in a school may lead to an appreciation of highly practical ways of raising the quality of experience available for pupils during school-day free-time.

There is an obvious danger that teacher researchers may fall into the trap of simply airing grievances or worries formed well in advance of the actual process of research. Further, such concerns may be expressed in a way which fails to pay genuine attention to the actual data gathered. In Chapter 4 I noted the procedures followed in the present research to limit the intrusion of subjectivity when commenting upon data.

In Chapter 4 I also noted Chisholm's careful defence of research characterised by 'explicit commitment' (1990). Her identification of

a common weakness in action research - a failure to acknowledge underlying theoretical concerns - is equally applicable to convential ethnography (1990, p. 253). It is fully conceded that the task of policy evaluation (and in particular the task of assessment of whether policy suggestions possess general utility beyond a narrow micro context) is greatly assisted where there is an attempt to make explicit theoretical concerns. Hence it is important to identify these concerns in the case of the present research.

The central objective of this study has been to examine the problem of pupil aggression during the course of school-day free-time. As a consequence, a key task was to identify patterns of bullying, cussing and fighting. At the same time the research identified the distinctive meanings of these terms within the specific micro context of City School. However, the research also explored broader, theoretical, questions. For example, it has constantly teased away at questions which relate to the intersection of patterns of groups membership, and attention has frequently been given to the sheer complexity of pupil social relations in a mixed, multicultural, inner city school.

Throughout the research has been concerned to tackle questions which relate to the micro processes of power: to explore, in other words, ways in which individuals or groups are constructed as objects by demeaning discourses and ways in which they are controlled through surveillance. In relation to this issue, with a very Foucaldian ring, two important points should be noted. Firstly, in Discipline and Punish (1991) Foucault placed emphasis upon the capacity of surveillance to act as a mechanism of control and the way in which such surveillance could find its physical, architectural expression within the design of institutions was explained graphically. Such threatening observation, for example, occurred very readily in

institutions which corresponded to Bentham's panoptic ideal (p. 200). Undoubtedly bullied children in school suffer extensively where they are consciously constrained by a sense that they are under surveillance, from other pupils. Yet the conditions for such bullying to arise may well be created where the adult eye is averted! Thus it would seem that the circumstances for bullying to flourish may be created through timetabling arrangements, architectural features of school sites and in the inability of teachers to 'read' the warning signs in pupil interaction. Somewhat ironically therefore it would seem that the absence of adequate adult 'surveillance' enables aggressors to control through surveillance.

Secondly, Foucault's underlying view of history suggests that there has been a general movement away from crude physical coercion to forms of control based upon surveillance. Yet at the level of the interactions of children, it would seem that there are few signs that surveillance has replaced physical coercion. Within the interactions of children at City School physical coercion was often evident. Furthermore it would seem that physical coercion may occur after, as well as prior to, surveillance. For example, if in classrooms girls fail to surrender their bats when boys start to watch their games of table tennis, the probability is that bats will be taken anyway.

Somewhat less obviously, and certainly less fashionably, close to the heart of the study reside issues with a Durkheimian flavour. The research has constantly teased away at questions which relate to the capacity of a comprehensive school to foster and maintain a sense of cohesion, consensus and community whilst also celebrating cultural diversity and creating structures to enable all children to have subsequent access to economic opportunity.

To focus upon issues which relate to a school's capacity to

achieve a sense of social solidarity is inevitably to run the risk of being accused of 'conservativism'. Yet there is merit in pleading guilty to such a charge where it is recognised that this involves a stance of opposition to pressures which operate to channel children from different ethnic groups to separate schools, and pressures to re-insert structures which channel working class and middle class children down different educational routes. My conviction that the question of how comprehensive schools can be enabled to become,or how comprehensive schools can be helped to remain, genuinely comprehensive has furthermore been reinforced through subsequent work in a middle school where over 90% of pupils are Asian in an area where most neighbouring schools have virtually all white populations. To assert this point is, of course, to enter firmly into the realm of politics. Yet, as Hargreaves demonstrates in The Challenge for the Comprehensive School : Culture, Curriculum and Community educationalists have to grapple with such questions (1982, Chapter 8). Furthermore, through understanding pupil aggression, it is possible that scope may be created to improve the experience available for those children for whom secondary education is a distressing rather than educationally challenging time.

Section Two

Key Points

During the course of the research it became abundantly clear that both staff and pupils at City School spent their working days in an environment in which a variety of forms of pupil aggression flourished. It was seen in Chapter 5 that the verbal exchanges of pupils within, or outside, the classroom could be punctuated by cussing and that this teasing caused great distress for those who tended to be the victims. The problem of fighting was examined in Chapter 6 and it was seen that there were frequently high intensity

fights in the Lower School. Such fights did not necessarily involve bullying, but they did have a highly disruptive effect upon school life. It became clear that children who were not personally bullied tended to think there was little bullying in the school. However, data gathered as a Head of Year showed that children drawn from some of the most vulnerable groups in the school population were especially at risk, whilst all children faced the possibility of great unpleasantness if problems within friendship groups developed.

Aggression - or the threat of aggression - was rarely far below the surface of chapters 8 to 10. Thus, it was seen that girls were denied access to a range of desirable playtime options; that younger pupils could have play disrupted by older children; and that the favourable impression of the relation between children from different age groups formed in the M.A. study had to be treated with some caution. Exploration of patterns of domination demonstrated some of the problems which teaching or supervisory staff could encounter and highlighted some of the dilemmas which would inevitably await any attempt to improve the quality of pupil social relations. It was also seen that tensions between pupils greatly reduced the time available for productive learning activities. Quarrels, or gossip about quarrels, could result in delays in the arrival of pupils for lessons; fights led to a loss of learning time for combatants and, more importantly, unsettled many children thereby creating an educationally unproductive atmosphere. Cussing and bullying made the lives of children who tended to be the target for abuse miserable and in extreme cases discouraged the attendance necessary for successful progression through school.

Time was lost in another important way. Tensions between pupils greatly reduced the time teachers could allocate to formal learning tasks. Where quarrels were very serious the need to settle disputes

and to reconcile and calm pupils would become a very pressing concern. The teaching programme of middle or senior managers could in particular be disrupted because of difficulties arising at transitional stages in the school-day (end of registration, end of break or lunch hour, and movement time between afternoon classes). Since the introduction of the National Curriculum there has been increasing concern about productive use of time within the school day. Undoubtedly the research raised important questions about non productive use of staff and pupil time within the school-day, at City School.

In Chapter 2 I noted the rapid development of research interest in bullying in recent years. Attention has, however, been drawn to a pervasive climate of aggression at City School. There is a possible danger that the current preoccupation of research with the phenomenon of bullying may in fact obscure important differences between inner urban comprehensive schools like City School and suburban or rural schools. Bullying was not the only problem at City School. It is fundamentally important to recognise that learning opportunities were undermined through a much wider climate of aggression. In this context it is important to note that conversations with pupils repeatedly showed that major grievances about school life related not to lessons and teaching but to the quality of pupil social relations. Thus, Gulfraz in Year 8 repeatedly complained that he was unhappy in school and his complaints invariably centred upon the 'roughness of the kids' and not lessons.

The power divisions embedded in the interactions of children were explored throughout the study. This aspect of the research was of central importance because in this way the true impact of pupil aggression was revealed. For a fundamental point was that pupils were

not merely reciprocally aggressive - though there was a great deal of aggression of this type. Instead it was constantly seen that vulnerable individuals and vulnerable groupings suffered greatly in the general climate of aggression. Hence isolated children could be bullied in alarmingly callous ways; girls, not boys, were denied access to playtime options; and younger children, not older children, had their games disrupted. Furthermore, even though the limitations of the present study's consideration of 'race' were emphasised, it was seen that vulnerable minority ethnic groupings were at times exposed to extremely unpleasant aggression.

In Chapter 3 I stressed that I felt that the distinctive contribution the present study could make was as a teacher researcher ethnographic account based upon long term research. Furthermore I emphasised that a primary aim of the study was to contribute to debate about policy rather than to abstract reflection upon theoretical questions about power. In Chapter 12, the final chapter of this study, attention therefore turns to more detailed consideration of policy implications.

CHAPTER 12

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

There are three sections in this chapter. In the first, I recognise the potential utility of the Elton Report (1989) when thinking about how to improve behaviour in schools. However, at the same time I note that City School already operated many of the forms of 'good practice' identified in the report prior to its publication. In the second I focus upon feasible institutional adjustments which may help to improve the quality of experience available for pupils during free-time at City School. The third section identifies issues of wider significance and notes some of the study's key insights with regard to gender, 'race' and age.

Section One

The Elton Report and City School's commitment to 'good practice'

The Elton Report, Discipline in Schools (1989), a report directly concerned to identify practical ways of improving behaviour in schools, and a report which has made an important contribution to current discussions about misbehaviour in schools, provides a helpful starting point for closer reflection upon policy implications. Though identification of stark examples of misbehaviour, like fighting, is relatively easy, the notion of 'good behaviour' is rather more problematic. Does good behaviour simply mean conformity to certain minimal standards which enable schools to get on with central pedagogic tasks, or does the concept have a rather wider meaning? Does it mean that pupils should share resources fairly instead of 'unthinkingly' securing the best for themselves? Furthermore, what form of intentionality should underpin good behaviour? Is conformity under the threat of coercion sufficient? Or, does the notion imply an autonomous sense of personal responsibility?

Interestingly, although on the surface paying lip service to wider issues, the Elton report is primarily orientated to the narrow issues of instrumental compliance to agreed behavioural standards in school. Yet some aspects of what may reasonably be considered to constitute poor behaviour are neglected. For example, the report has very little to say about the problem of male domination in mixed-sex schools and does not address, in detail, the 'hidden curriculum' which underpins such inequality.[1] Throughout this study it has been assumed that bullying, cussing and fighting and allied patterns of domination are educationally undesirable and not merely sociologically interesting. Equally, it is assumed that it is the task of schools to help pupils to develop an enduring, autonomous, sense of personal responsibility and not merely to achieve instrumental compliance to agreed behavioural standards.

Discipline in Schools takes an optimistic view of what schools can achieve through a clear whole school policy which combines consistency and fair mindedness,under the guidance of senior staff who provide real leadership and effective management. Yet reflection upon the fact that City School already operated, prior to the Elton Report, many of the identified forms of 'good practice' suggests a little pessimistically that, in some circumstances, there may be constraints upon what can be achieved via a focus upon school policy without a rather more radical examination of the actual structure of secondary schooling willing to address awkward questions about ages of transfer between schools and the size of some comprehensive schools based on split sites.

Numerous well established forms of good practice had been followed at City School for many years prior to the publication of the Elton Report: it will be remembered that the school enjoyed a deservedly high reputation in comparison with several other secondary

schools in its locality - a factor making the underlying problems of aggression amongst pupils especially worrying. Amongst such forms of 'good practice' were the following. Strenuous efforts were made to ensure good communication channels with parents[2] and an accompanying emphasis was placed upon the positive acknowledgement of pupil achievement[3] both through letters to parents, through school certificates and via a high quality weekly newsletter. A clear code of conduct[4] was displayed on homework diaries and during the time of research the school began to display standardised lesson routines on all classroom walls. Furthermore, a great strength of City School was that teachers were not overly aggressive; neither male nor female teachers utilised sanctions which humiliated children.[5] It would be absurd to suggest that all the systems which find favour in the Elton Report were in operation and the school fully recognised the need to improve both tutorial work and the provision of Personal and Social Education. Nonetheless the underlying point remains: City School was a forward looking institution, committed to the pursuit of consistency and development and an institution keen to foster improving learning opportunities.

Through recognition of City School's genuine commitment to modes of operation which tend to find approval when identifying the means whereby schools can become effective and through which high standards of motivation and behaviour can be secured, the pertinency of deeper questions which relate to the size and character of the institution become obvious. Hargreaves, in The Challenge for the Comprehensive School : Culture, Curriculum and Community (1982), highlights the impersonality of many large comprehensives and portrays especially effectively the loss within some large comprehensives of traditions or routines which create a real sense of belonging (1982, Chapter 5). Further he aptly suggests that the end of lessons may be like a scene

at a railway station with pupils weighed down by baggage, on the move (p. 89).

Is it possible that at the heart of City School's problems was the fact that it was two institutions struggling to be one? Few obvious advantages accrued from the linkage of the Upper and Lower School in one unitary institution. Between lessons large numbers of pupils and staff struggled across the busy main road which separated the two school sites, an arrangement which inevitably generated a constant cycle of late arrivals. The major factor underpinning all this movement was the desire to provide teachers with a balanced teaching programme including both Upper and Lower School children. Both sites had adequate facilities including dining halls, gymnasia and an assortment of specialist teaching rooms.

To highlight this is of course to move some way from this study's focal interest in the quality of pupil social relations. Nonetheless, it is tempting to wonder whether this dispiriting context may actually have set up the conditions for aggression between pupils to flourish. Were that to be the case the real route to resolve such difficulties resides in an imaginative and radical restructuring of the educational unit to create two entirely separate institutions. Thus, it might be speculated that the Lower School could function very effectively as an independent Junior High School whilst the Upper School could thrive as a Senior High School or 'Qualification Centre'. In addition to the obvious curricular benefits of such an arrangement, (like, for example, the provision of a consistent opportunity for staff and pupils to arrive in lessons on time), there would be advantages at the level of the hidden curriculum. In the case of City School radical change of this type might represent one realistic route which offers a combined way of tackling problems both in the area of

pupil relationships and in the provision of a tightly co-ordinated school day whilst at the same time remaining loyal to the comprehensive ideal.

Section Two

Institutional adjustments, including the provision of relevant INSET

During the study it became clear that the actual character of the relationship between individuals or groups of pupils could remain hidden from staff. A child could be bullied for a surprisingly long period of time without the form tutor (the teacher with close, everyday contact with a specific registration group) recognising that there was a difficulty.

Some problems could have been avoided had staff been better able to 'read' warning signs (for example, sudden absence from school, change in seating position in lesson, sly cussing etc.). Undoubtedly it tended to be the least experienced form tutors who had the weakest capacity to 'read' pupil interaction. Nevertheless all staff would have benefited from an opportunity for measured reflection upon the nature, and quality, of pupil interaction in school. For example, all staff needed to be fully aware that the recognition of problems at an early stage was important for it was at this stage that broader trouble involving siblings or friends from other classes could be avoided.

Undoubtedly the question of what actually underpinned some of the taken for granted features of the pupil social world could have been a fruitful starting point for discussion. For example, by highlighting disparities in the perceptions of boys and girls about boys' continuing domination of playground space, the data showed that important questions about the relationship between curricular efforts

to secure equality of opportunity and the persistence of sexist practices at an institutional level could have been addressed. Equally other awkward questions about the frequency of fights or about the relationship between cussing and characteristics of school organisation (for example, the length of lessons[6] and the absence of an afternoon break) might have been raised. Much good could have resulted merely from the provision of opportunity for formal reflection upon these issues. Furthermore teaching staff would have been left with no room to assume that pupil social worlds at secondary level inevitably display the characteristics evident in the school. The value of this should not be underestimated. Like many inner city schools City School relied heavily upon teachers without experience of work outside major urban connurbations. There was therefore always a danger that staff could see an educational environment unduly dislocated by pupil aggression as non problematic because of an employment background of work in other inner urban schools beset by similar problems.[7]

The relationship between the characteristics of free-time interaction and lessons could also undoubtedly have proved a fertile foundation for staff discussion within an INSET programme. Staff needed to be alerted to some of the very practical ways in which the characteristics of pupil relationships during free-time could have consequences which impinged upon lessons. Three examples help to make the point. Firstly, staff needed to know that requests by younger pupils (and in particular requests by younger girls) to go to the toilet during lesson times could reflect difficulties in gaining access to the Lavatory Blocks during free-time. Secondly, staff needed to be alert to the possibility that when pupils entered lessons for afternoon classes there could be an undercurrent of unpleasantness as a consequence of quarrels developing during the lunch break.

Thirdly, staff needed to be aware of the general impact of the lunch break - an impact which can be termed the 'wind up' effect.

Some of the experiences available during the lunch break – the experience of standing in a restless lunch queue for a protracted period of time, the experience of hanging around on the edges of cramped playgrounds, the experience of charging up and down school stairways and corridors in chasing games – tended to raise pupil excitement excessively before the start of afternoon registration. It would be absurd to suggest that teaching staff were entirely unaware of these difficulties. Nevertheless, INSET which focused upon these points could have been a fertile source of practical suggestions to combat some of these problems.

At the beginning of Chapter 5, it was stressed that there was widespread agreement amongst staff that cussing constituted a 'problem'. The research identified many aspects of this problem and consideration of these points would also prove to be worthwhile. Firstly, it was seen that there was often a close relationship between cussing and fighting: serious cussing tended to trigger fights. Greater staff consciousness about this relationship may well have helped in the longer term to reduce the actual amount of fighting in the school. Secondly, there was a need for staff to appreciate the potentially devastating consequences of verbal abuse for some pupils with, perhaps, the least positive sense of personal identity - pupils, for example, with pronounced special educational needs, or pupils self conscious about their size, appearance or poor clothing. It would be misleading to suggest that teaching staff were unaware that verbal abuse could be very hurtful. Nevertheless, it is not immediately clear that all teaching staff were aware just how demoralising it was for children to suffer from cruel comment which targeted an aspect of their identity which they had little or no scope to change in the

short term.

As the study progressed the problem of high intensity fights became an increasing point of concern because such fights happened with surprising frequency, caused great excitement and distress, and undermined the authority of all staff. In Chapter 2 it was noted that fighting rarely featured in research or teacher training. Not surprisingly, because of the lack of information about fighting within current educational research and within teacher training programmes, the school did not provide any clear guidance to staff about what to do in the event of a fight. Yet, because the worst fights carried attendant risks for members of staff who felt an obligation to intervene, there was an urgent need for fuller guidance about this point. Such advice needed to achieve a balance between the necessity to stop fights (and it has to be remembered that in some circumstances a largely innocent party could be pressed into a fight in the middle of a hostile crowd) against the need to preserve staff authority, dignity and safety. Furthermore, staff should have been explicitly advised never to stop fights when alone. Such advice might seem rather extreme. Yet it has to be noted that on occasions over excited pupils were openly obstructive of members of staff when fights happened and there was a real risk of injury to some lunch time supervisors - members of staff with the least authority and the lowest salaries. Of course the provision of 'advice' is always easiest when distanced from the dynamic flow of events and it is valuable therefore to recognise that there were times when fights could only be stopped by the energetic and co-operative action of several members of staff.

Consideration of the problem of fighting underlines why it would be foolish in the extreme to imagine that City School could sort out tensions in the pupil social world merely by the provision of improved

INSET. Within the school there was above all a need for a rather more imaginative effort to create a climate of goodwill both between pupils and between pupils and staff. Interestingly during the course of the research period the school had introduced a consistently robust response when fights happened and there was a strong possibility that, in the absence of mitigating circumstances, fighters would be excluded from school. Yet it was by no means clear that this approach was in isolation effective. It was not in any case feasible to maintain this consistently firm line. The sheer number of problems being channelled in the direction of Heads of Years or senior staff necessitated the downplaying of some incidents since a considerable time investment is involved in formalising an exclusion in a way which complies with statutory requirements.

There is an obvious danger that for the reader, the portrayal of high intensity fighting at City School may appear exaggerated. Little can perhaps be said to combat this. Yet it has to be noted that my previous teaching experience had been in other urban secondary schools where fighting did not intrude so obviously into the everyday life of pupils. Undoubtedly the research highlighted the need for some research explicitly concerned to tease out the linkages between high intensity fighting in school and outside street culture. There would almost certainly have been far fewer fights had fights not been regarded as 'cool'.

Did the research demonstrate that the association between the aggression of male teachers and male pupils can be dangerously overplayed? At the least it showed the need for caution about this point because there were few, if any, obvious models of aggression. Could there, for example, be a somewhat closer link with other role models: the models of aggression provided, for example, through film, video or television? The lack of evidence about fighting in schools

prior to the video boom perhaps excludes the possibility of investigation of changing patterns, if any, of aggression in school. Yet it is interesting that Discipline in Schools (Elton) stresses that there can be no complacency about the impact of video nasties (1989, p. 161). The fact that inter pupil violence may flourish without aggressive male teachers is a factor which increases the possibility that this alternative link may be rather more important: it may be suspected that it is Mad Max and not the form tutor who provides the more exciting and influential role model for some children. Interestingly, Carol Jones in 'Sexual Tyranny : Male violence in a mixed secondary school' appears to be convinced that video images play a significant role in forming amongst boys hostile, contemptuous and aggressive attitudes towards girls (1985, p. 33).

There was a general readiness at City School to acknowledge that lunchtime was a time when many problems amongst pupils developed. Interestingly, however, although the school aimed to be pro-active, and although staff were actively involved in after school workshops which focused upon key areas of educational provision (curriculum delivery, assessment, resourcing, equal opportunities), comparatively little attention had been given to the practical question of how to organise the lunch break to ensure that pupils returned to class ready to benefit from afternoon lessons. Blatchford in Playtime in the Primary School (1989, pp 124-7) offers a number of innovative ideas worthy of consideration in tackling problems associated with the lunch hour. Thus, he suggests ways of strengthening and improving the contribution of lunch time supervisors by ensuring that all supervisors are trained. He also advocates the involvement of supervisors in creating a policy on behaviour at playtime.

A number of possible changes which could have been introduced

without undue difficulty were worthy of consideration. An extended afternoon registration (ten minutes instead of five minutes) could have been used as an opportunity to 'wind down' pupils prior to departure to afternoon classes. An extended registration period of this type would also have provided an ideal opportunity to ensure that children were appropriately equipped with pens, pencils and books prior to departure to afternoon classes as well as a helpful pause between the frantic activity of lunchtime and afternoon classes.

The lunch break lasted from 12 till 12.55. Partly because the break was relatively short there were few lunch time clubs and there was no absolute necessity for it to last longer than the time required for all pupils taking school dinner to get meals. All pupils could be catered for in the first forty minutes of the lunch hour and the lunch break could therefore have been further shortened. Throughout the research period it was abundantly evident that it was in the final stages of the lunch break, during the period when playgrounds or walkways were crowded because no pupils were in the dining hall, that many problems between pupils emerged. Shortening the lunch break would have avoided this troublesome period.

Ironically such an arrangement would have had a further advantage. There was no afternoon break and pupils were expected to focus upon work for two consecutive seventy minute lessons separated merely by five minutes movement time between classes! This arrangement bore no relation to the capacity of many pupils (and staff?) to sustain concentration. An afternoon break would in itself have also probably helped to reduce problems at the end of the school day by dampening the level of frustration felt by pupils after a long, unbroken spell of classroom 'enclosure'. Further, this might in turn have helped to reduce fights or quarrels at the end of the school day.

In Chapter 4 it was noted that senior staff had taken a number of imaginative steps to improve the quality of opportunities available to Lower School pupils in the lunchtime: it was seen that a garden area had been built on waste land at the Lower School and that basketball posts had been provided in one play area. Yet the continued problems of younger boys and in particular of girls in gaining unhindered access to the playgrounds were noted in Chapter 8. Broader issues which relate to both age and gender are considered below. At this point, however, it is important to note that the limited access of girls to the playgrounds was especially unsatisfactory. There was therefore a particularly powerful case for arguing that one of the three Lower School playgrounds should have been for the exclusive use of girls. In addition, it would have been helpful to allocate some common rooms in the Lower School for the exclusive use of girls.

Throughout much of the research period the issue of staff supervision during the lunch hour remained controversial. The school was fully aware that many pupils tended to get rather overexcited as a consequence, in part, of the inadequate character of lunch time supervision. Lunch time supervisors had little or no status in the eyes of pupils. Furthermore some duties placed supervisors in contact with pupils in situations where frustrations were likely to develop and where tempers were liable to be short. The supervision of pupils waiting to enter the dining hall was especially problematic. At its worst, if delays developed in serving of food, one or two supervisors could be faced with the unenviable task of looking after a heaving mass of pupils pushing at the entrance to the dining area. The school was attempting to introduce policies to tackle problems evident in the relationship between supervisors and pupils (by for example, recruiting teachers as paid supervisors) but far more needed to be done.

One aspect of this problem was especially unsatisfactory. Throughout the research period there were virtually no black supervisors. This was especially unfortunate because there was a tendency for a particularly harmful and unwanted form of dispute (which involved white supervisors claiming that they had been pushed by black youngsters and black youngsters claiming that they had been pushed by white supervisors) to emerge as a result of delays in the queue. A greater atmosphere of trust would undoubtedly have emerged had more supervisors been black.

The issue of supervision did not merely relate to the lunch hour. It became increasingly clear that the end of the school-day was a time when pupils tended to get at cross purposes. Because of the problem of staff movement between the Upper and Lower school buildings for lessons there were very real difficulties in ensuring an adequate level of staff supervision at the close of school. Yet the forms of behaviour not uncommonly witnessed at the end of the day - fights, undue excitement with large crowds of pupils hanging around because of rumours of fights, the arrival of older 'visitors' on the school site and the occasional intimidation of isolated pupils fearful of leaving the site - were especially damaging to the school. Not only did such problems undermine the morale of pupils seeking only for a 'quiet life' and an opportunity to get on with the business of learning, for problems at the end of the school-day tended to be highly visible and as a consequence inevitably undermined the good reputation of the school in the locality. In order to maintain a deservedly good image developed over many years, City School needed a very carefully thought out strategy to cope with pupil departure. The 'low key' approach, which involved a minimal level of staff supervision at the end of afternoon school, very clearly did not work. Hence the school urgently

needed to develop timetable arrangements which would provide opportunities for rather more staff to be on duty in visibly obvious locations at the close of the day.

The concept of surveillance is valuable in thinking about pupil departure from school. Teachers were barely visible at precisely the stage in the school-day when departing pupils could be under the intimidating gaze of older youths from outside school or the Upper School site. And at precisely the same time the school was under the watchful (albeit less threatening) gaze of local residents and parents arriving in cars to pick up their children.

Other positive changes were worthy of consideration. A staggered end to the school-day, with Upper School pupils finishing school later than children in the Lower School, would have proved beneficial. This would have prevented older children from making their way to the Lower School in search of excitement, amusement or 'trouble'. Equally, a system of reward granting a class with excellent work in a week the right to leave school early on Friday afternoon would undoubtedly have created greater interest in speedy departure from the site. Above all, a much fuller programme of after school activity, with far more children staying behind for clubs, would have given worthwhile reasons for pupils to stay behind. This would also have reduced the congregation of pupils for less desirable reasons. An ironic, sad, and dispiriting feature of school life was that whilst there were often problems in securing attendance, or reasonably punctual arrival at lessons, there were also serious problems in getting pupils to go home at the end of the day!

Section Three

Wider Considerations

a) Gender

The high degree of aggression - verbal or physical - which girls could show to one another was an unexpected feature of the study. It was seen that the verbal abuse which tended to be most upsetting for girls was that which flowed from other girls; it became clear that sudden isolation or rejection by a former group of friends, a potentially devastating experience for a child, was far more common amongst girls than boys. Though girls seldom fought, it was seen that there were groups of girls who threw their weight around unduly and where this occurred it was other girls who suffered.

Is there a danger that because of a very understandable primary need to target injustices stemming from male domination, schools may fail to recognise that unwelcome forms of aggression may also characterise the interaction of girls in mixed schools? There was no evidence that senior staff at City School fell into this trap, but there was a tendency for younger staff to assume that the only patterns of aggression which needed to be tackled were those which involved boys. It is important that schools do not lose sight of this point because of the desire to address the more 'political' issue of boy/girl aggression. Interestingly the study identified physical areas which were of focal importance for bullying amongst girls - toilet blocks, and changing rooms - areas, in other words, where girls were away from adults.

It was clear that boys continued to dominate desirable play facilities throughout the time of the research. Again, whilst girls were able to articulate a sense of injustice about this unfairness, they were, apparently, unable to secure their entitlements. Though exposure to a curriculum which openly focuses upon gender inequality may overcome such problems, power divisions reduce this prospect. Inequalities persisted in spite of a determination to promote equality

of opportunity through the formal school curriculum.

Does this underline the value of simple direct action? The mere organisational change of allocating one playground for the exclusive use of girls would have given girls a fairer opportunity to play outside. Can it be claimed, moreover, that this underlines the importance of schools thinking carefully about the balance they achieve between direct action and longer term, curricular - led activities in combatting inequalities.

An important research finding was that girls were most concerned about physical sexual harassment in lessons not in the playground. It is therefore especially important for teachers to be alert to signs of harassment in lessons since teachers may be inclined to believe that harassment cannot occur in their own presence.[8]

A further point of primary importance should also be noted. The data suggested that there were limitations upon what could be achieved, in terms of encouraging the development of full equality of opportunity, merely through the formal school curriculum. If the undermining effect of outside pressures (the influence of aspects of the media, parental influence and popular culture) is to be resisted, then there is a need for schools to give children an opportunity to engage rather more imaginatively with the issue of sexism.

b) 'Race'

An alertness to the thorny problems which beset attempts to combat the formation and reproduction of racialist practices and attitudes is a great strength of Cohen's 'The Perversions of inheritance : Studies in the Making of Multi Racist Britain' (1989). Cohen is sensitively alert to the possibility that anti racist work may run the risk of generating resistance amongst white youths - a resistance which can find expression at playground level. At City School teachers invested a great deal of time and energy in English, Social Studies, Humanities

and the pastoral programme to activities intended to foster good race relations. Yet how effective was this work, given the nature of playground experience?

All children at City School benefited from a curriculum which acknowledged, quite rightly, the continuation of racial discrimination and injustice in British society. Yet less satisfactorily, though not unnaturally, there was no scope to acknowledge within the school curriculum the possibility that some white pupils could face locally specific difficulties at playground level. The present study showed, however, that at times white pupils could face problems at playground level which were not caused by their own aggression. Any attempt to free all pupils from the shackles of racism implies a willingness to be sensitively alert to the micro characteristics of schools as well as to the deep-rooted structural realities of British society. Is it possible therefore that fruitful lines of research could begin by engaging with the experience of white pupils in inner city schools where though numerically advantaged white pupils do not constitute the most powerful group within the pupil social world?

In the case of City School, for example, it would have been fascinating to learn more about how working class children 'squared' at a phenomenological level the 'anti racist' messages they received from predominantly middle class white teachers via the school curriculum and their own actual experiences at playground level. An example serves to make this point somewhat more clear. An interesting discussion developed in a G.C.S.E. class one day whilst members of the group focused upon a past paper examination question dealing with racialism. Quite understandably past paper questions which focused upon this area tended to follow a somewhat stereotyped pattern and racialism was invariably portrayed via a focus upon the experience of members of minority ethnic groups. In the lesson in question many

members of the class were absent because practical exams had already begun and as a consequence John, a white member of the class, was far less guarded than usual and volunteered some of his own school-related experiences. John suggested that, in his opinion, Afro Caribbean boys tended to 'take liberties' and pointed out that he had been beaten up both within and outside school by Afro Caribbean pupils. John was very far from racialist in his own attitudes and he was able to articulate his own experiences with a sensitive but clear awareness of broader historical patterns of oppression, exploitation and injustice.

It is important to recognise that John's utilisation of the term 'taking liberties' was not underpinned by racism. He did not mean that Afro Caribbean pupils were trying to manoeuvre away from a disadvantaged position which he felt they should occupy. Instead John meant, in essence, that the discourse of racial injustice tended to provide Afro Caribbean boys with licence for aggression. In effect, he felt that Afro Caribbean pupils were able to manipulate this discourse and that as a consequence bullying at City School was tolerated by teaching staff. Irrespective of the merits of John's perception, it is abundantly clear that far more needs to be known about how white pupils actually respond to a curriculum which actively seeks to prepare all pupils to play a part in a society freed from the shackles of racism. Is the effect of curricular work within the formal school curriculum expressly intended to combat racism merely to suppress racist attitudes which re-emerge with renewed vigour when white pupils leave school?

It is questionable whether institutions like City School can succeed in the formidable task of combatting the formation of racist attitudes amongst white pupils, if individual teachers do not understand the actual dynamics of playground life in their school. Yet undoubtedly many teachers begin careers in inner

city schools singularly ill-prepared to grapple with some of the subtle ways in which racism can find expression within the unique context of any given school. Thus, a powerful case can be made for suggesting that all schools should give new employees immediate support in order to enable them to begin to understand the nature of pupil social relations in their new school.

Above all, it is crucial that teachers should be able to relate broadly understood principles about inequality and racialism in British society to the actual conditions in a given school. Carefully thought out support for incoming staff would reduce the possibility that pupil antagonisms are intensified, or created, through well meaning but clumsy efforts to combat racism. Unless accompanied by a carefully considered focus upon the role all children can play and collectively share in constructing a better society there is little point in teachers rehearsing arguments about the genesis and persistance of racism in Britain. Nothing is gained by merely placing white children in schools in the position of whipping boys, or girls, because of the undoubted sins of their forefathers. But such a possibility may arise in some circumstances. There is a dispiriting possibility that some white children may be far from racialist until bullied as a side product of teachers' clumsy efforts to focus upon racism!

During the time of the research City School had achieved a staffing structure in which women were more fairly represented in positions of middle or senior management. All the three major subject departments, Mathematics, Science and English were led by women, two of the three Deputy Headteachers were women and three of the six Heads of Years were women. Yet the school had not appointed ethnic minority candidates to major posts of responsibility. At the end of the research period only two departmental heads were from minority ethnic

groups and no Heads of Years or members of the senior management team were from ethnic minorities. Undoubtedly some of the problems in terms of the relationship between pupils drawn from different ethnic groups could have been handled more effectively had more black teachers occupied major positions of responsibility.

The importance of more black candidates progressing to positions of senior responsibility is widely recognised and at City School this was absolutely vital. Immense advantages for both staff and pupils would have accrued had this been the case. There was a perception rightly and wrongly amongst older white pupils that Afro Caribbean pupils could 'get away' with more than white youngsters in school. Paradoxically an unfortunate manifestation of accidental institutional racism related to this point: a failure to treat all pupils in a consistent way in spite of an agreed whole school policy structure. Thus the progression of Afro Caribbean pupils towards exclusion in the event of serious misconduct could at times undoubtedly be slower than that of white youngsters. It was, however, the power relations aspect of this problem which was of greatest significance. Thus Afro Caribbean pupils had the opportunity to claim that they were being picked upon by staff in circumstances where this was clearly not the case. Further, this was allied to an institutional imperative to ensure that Afro Caribbean pupils were not over represented in exclusion figures.

Had Afro Caribbean teachers occupied senior positions in the school the scope for mutual misunderstanding and mistrust would have been immensely reduced. Other important advantages would also have accrued from such a change. It must be remembered that City School like other similar schools was an institution in which there was very heavy communal investment by Afro Caribbean families. Notwithstanding the existence of separate schools, the gateway to success for Afro

Caribbean youngsters hinges overwhelmingly upon achievement in schools like City School, a task made immensely more difficult by an encounter with an overwhelmingly white teaching staff and an entirely white senior management team.

c) Age

In Chapter 11 it was seen that a sensitivity to the role of age in the pupil social world helpfully illuminated aspects of pupil interaction. It was, in addition, seen that the character of the relationship between pupils of different ages tended to place constraints upon younger children. Thus some younger pupils experienced difficulties in gaining and maintaining access to the playgrounds. Yet City School operated largely upon an implicit assumption that age played a non problematic role in the pupil social world.

In the course of the study we saw that there were good reasons for younger pupils to be cautious or wary in their dealings with older children. Is it possible therefore that research could fruitfully focus on the character of the relationship between younger and older pupils in secondary school and the linkages between this relationship and the blunting of pupil progress after transfer? A rather paradoxical feature of school life was that whilst age set membership was a fundamental feature of the organisation of pupil groupings, age did not feature in formal school life significantly beyond this. For example, older pupils were rarely, if ever, entrusted with duties or responsibilities in relation to younger pupils.

Somewhat ironically it was seen that age actually featured very prominently within the social world of pupils. Thus, access to playground games tended to hinge upon the requirements of older boys and a fear of older girls made some younger girls reluctant to go the toilet blocks during breaktime. Further, from time to time older pupils displayed 'organisational' skills - the skills

necessary, for example, to control and supervise fights.

Like many schools in the era since the demise of prefect systems, City School made no real effort to tap into the possible benefits which could accrue from a more sensitive awareness of the role age played within the pupil social world. This was undoubtedly a pity. For there were very clear signs that older children were able to act with a real sense of maturity and responsibility when entrusted by staff with duties in relation to younger children. For example, City School each year took very careful steps to ensure that new pupils joining the school were made to feel at home. An important stage in this process actually occurred well before the arrival of the new Year 7 pupils. During the annual phase when the Lower School was open for visits by parents and prospective new pupils, current Lower School pupils would help by showing visitors around. This task was invariably performed with a great sense of responsibility and pride.

It was stressed in Chapter 10 that there is a fundamental difference between age set membership and other potential stratifying mechanisms. There was, it was suggested, an essentially egalitarian dimension to this phenomenon because the initially disadvantaged automatically move to occupy more elevated positions. Since age is underpinned by this egalitarian factor, there is no a priori reason why schools should not make sensible use of age grade membership in support of educational goals. All children enjoy the possibility of enjoying privileges which schools choose to allocate to specific age sets. Equally, all children enjoy the possibility of performing particular responsibilities which schools allocate to specific age sets.

The potential value of using older pupils in a helping capacity to assist new pupils is recognised by Measor and Woods in Changing Schools (1988, p. 166). However, they also note that some schools have

experienced problems when trying to do this. In the case of City School, it is possible that some form of pupil 'tutor' system could have contributed in a productive way to the improvement of pupil social relations whilst also alleviating settling-in difficulties. At City School such a scheme could have linked pupils from forms in the Lower and Upper School so as to enable older pupils to act as tutor helpers. Such a scheme would have proved very helpful. It would, for example, have provided younger pupils with an opportunity to air any problems experienced in coping with the complexities of life in a large secondary school. At the same time such an arrangement would have provided younger pupils with an opportunity to draw attention to any problems of bullying which they may have been reluctant to discuss with adults. An arrangement of this sort would also have helped older students, if there is truth in the underlying assumption that responsible actions arise where opportunities for responsibility are created.

To place trust in older pupils in this way represents a radical, but not an elitist, approach towards tackling the problems of interpersonal or group aggression which blighted pupil interaction. Further, the placement of <u>all</u> older pupils in a position of trust differs fundamentally from prefect systems which simply allocate particular responsibilities to select groups of older children perceived to be more capable than their peers of acting responsibly.

<u>d) A revival of interest in school activities?</u>

Is it possible that imaginative attention to activity structures at City School could have played an important role in reducing pupil aggression? Undoubtedly a vibrant and carefully thought out House System would have been of immense value. Like many schools in the 1980s, City School went through a protracted phase when many forms of

competition were frowned upon. Towards the end of the research phase however, the school was becoming much more open once again to some of the possible benefits of positively channelled competition. Interestingly, pupils themselves demonstrated from time to time how overtly competitive activities could raise both staff and pupil morale. Shortly before the end of the research phase, for example, a group of Year 9 girls organised a highly successful talent contest. Even though the organisational difficulties in running a vibrant House System should not be underestimated, there are powerful reasons for believing that a scheme of this sort could have played a part in improving the quality of pupil social relations. Further, the key point is that such a scheme should complement, not replace, curricular work.

At City School there were depressingly few ways for pupils to register achievement outside the formal school curriculum. An imaginative House System could undoubtedly have helped to provide more opportunities for more children to gain success in diverse ways, without in any way undermining possibilities for children to gain achievements via the formal school curriculum.

I have already noted that Discipline in Schools (Elton, 1989) stresses the importance of school's ensuring that rewards play a greater role than punishments within disciplinary structures. A House System could have played a part in generating a reward system that would keep pupil interest. By Year 8 in many cases, and by Year 9 in almost all cases, pupils at City School had lost interest in the individualistically directed credit point system and were often very anxious to ensure that their achievements were not acknowledged in front of peers! As cynicism set in, for example, pupils were intensely hostile to the award of certificates for attaining targets for the accumulation of credit points in assembly. By contrast, it is

possible that a house point system could have retained the interest of more children for longer since the accumulation of points would have been supporting a group rather than merely rewarding an individual rapidly labelled as 'swotty'.

Furthermore, a well run House System could also have performed a vital homogenising role by drawing together boys and girls of different ages and from different ethnic groups. Hence an effective House System could have challenged underlying polarising tendencies (like the fragmentation of the school population into separate years) which may have played a part in creating the conditions for aggression between pupils to flourish.

Yet very sadly there was little prospect that a scheme of this sort would gain widespread support because of the association of the concept of House System with grammar schools or private sector schooling. Hence, somewhat unimaginatively, efforts to enable pupils to develop positive social relations remained confined to the intellectualising focus of the formal school curriculum: an emphasis, that is, upon words said in classrooms, rather than upon activity to draw children together through what they actually do!

An imaginative House System could have provided a balanced programme of activities which drew upon the diverse talents and cultural traditions of children in the school to enrich the educational experience of all. House music or drama competitions could, for example, have been occasions to celebrate disparate musical, verbal or dance traditions enjoying status amongst young people, whilst at the same time renewing a sense of purpose within the school as a cohesive and caring community. To make this point is at one level to recognise the significance of ritual in education, and to appreciate, as stressed by Bernstein, Elvin and Peters in 'Ritual in Education' (1971) , that ritual creates and conserves consensus as

well as earmarking difference. At the same time a slightly different point is made. For the key idea here is that at the heart of any whole school approach towards the achievement of improvements in the area of pupil social relations should be found an emphasis upon 'doing structures'. Of course a term such as 'House System' - a term negatively associated with the era of empire and of the days when grammar schools attempted to copy the real, and imagined, features of public schools - is clearly redundant. Yet many of the ideas underlying such scheme - the desire to provide diverse opportunities for achievement, the desire to give opportunities for healthy forms of competition and above all the desire to provide linkages between children of different age - are of immense value. Thus, a carefully thought out system of this type has the potential to be immensely useful in combating some of the less attractive features of secondary school life identified in this study.

At City School an imaginatively named (what about 'Posse System'?) and, more importantly, appropriately adapted, form of House System could have drawn upon one of the central insights available for anyone seeking to focus upon the play of children in the primary years - the process of playing together tends to bind together. Throughout this study I have constantly teased out the forms of aggression which blighted the lives of many pupils at City School. Is it possible that an imaginatively organised 'Posse System' offers one way to begin to rise to the real challenge and tackle this problem?

Footnotes

Chapter 12

1. Discipline in Schools does, however, consider sexual harassment to be a form of bullying (Elton, 1989 Recommendation 65).

2. City School undoubtedly met this target. Staff meetings were regular and a detailed weekly diary was published (Elton, 1989, Recommendation 15).

3. Discipline in Schools recommended that schools should achieve a 'healthy balance between rewards and punishments' (Elton, 1989, Recommendation 23).

4. Before the publication of Discipline in Schools City School had developed a whole school behaviour policy which included a clear code of conduct displayed on all homework diaries. Further, a concerted effort was made to ensure that this was explained clearly to parents and pupils right from the initial stages of discussion about entry. (Elton, 1989, Recommendation 21).

5. Discipline in Schools (Elton, 1989, Recommendation 27).

6. In Discipline in Schools the importance of careful timetabling is stressed (Recommendation 51). Ironically at City School the introduction of a four period day had helped to reduce problems which related to pupil movement but had at the same time created new forms of tension as a consequence of overlong lessons.

7. This comment is based on observation, not a formal survey. Undoubtedly, however, staff were overwhelmingly recruited from other city schools, or straight from university.

8. In this respect the study's portrayal of sexual harassment is similar to that which is provided by Mahoney in Schools for the Boys : Co-education Re-assessed (1984).

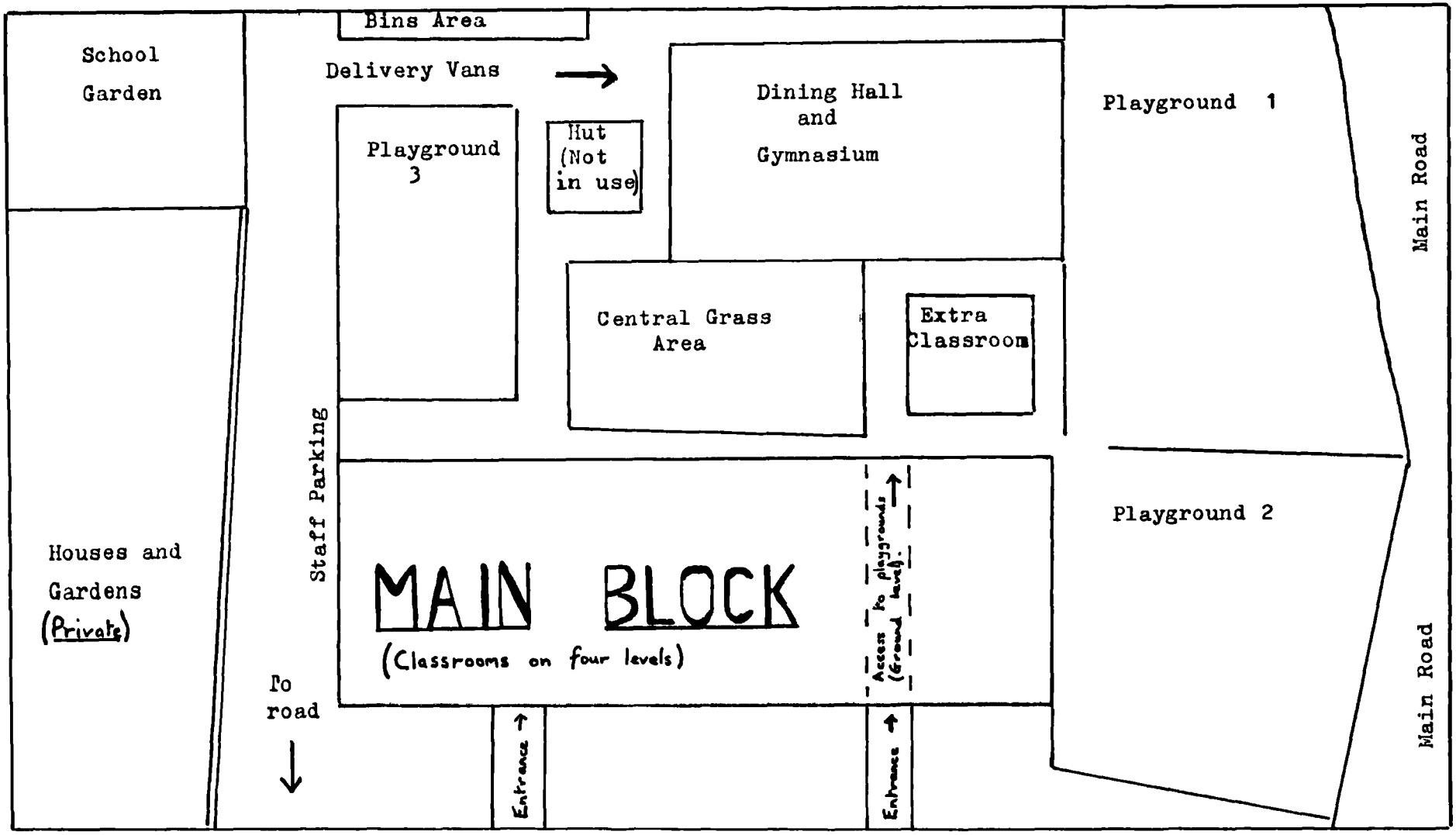
9. I must stress that I am not advancing a claim here that John's perception of his experience is accurate. Instead I am simply arguing for the need for research to engage with the experience of pupils being schooled in institutions with very varying populations.

10. Where serious misbehaviour arose from Afro Caribbean pupils the school had a dilemma because of the very understandable external pressure to ensure that Afro Caribbean pupils were not disproportionally represented in figures which related to major sanctions. However in fairness to staff it is important to note that the pragmatic concern was intertwined with a very genuine vocational desire to combat racism in its various institutional guises.

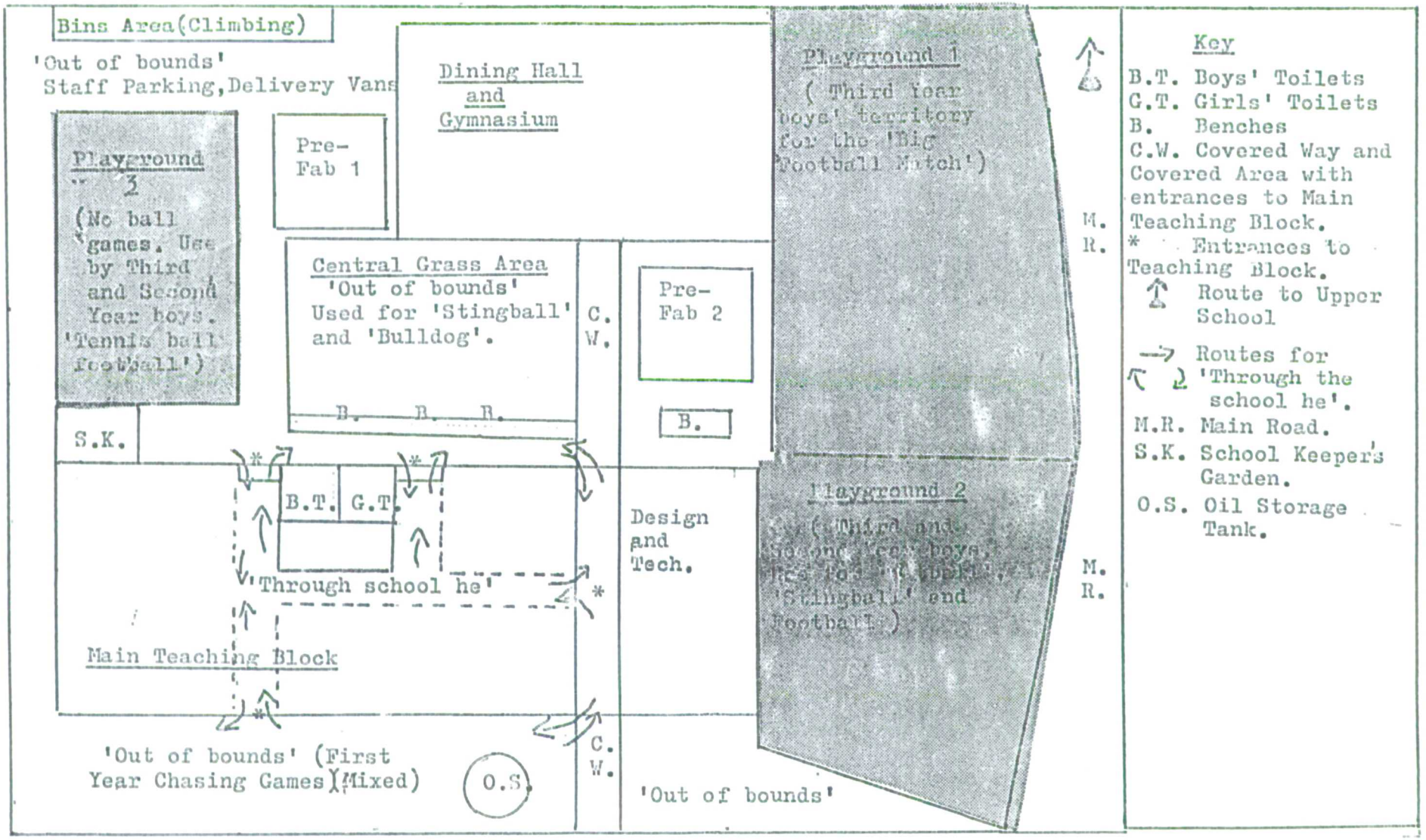
APPENDIX 1

City School (Lower School Site)

* 540 11-14 year old pupils.
* Limited facilities for school-day free-time.



APPENDIX 2


Bins Area(Climbing)
'Out of bounds'
Staff Parking, Delivery Vans
Dining Hall and Gymnasium
Playground 1
(Third Year boys' territory for the 'Big Football Match')
Playground 3
(No ball games. Use by Third and Second Year boys. 'Tennis ball football')
Pre-Fab 1
Central Grass Area
'Out of bounds'
Used for 'Stingball' and 'Bulldog'.
C.W.
Pre-Fab 2
B. B. B.
B.
S.K.
B.T. G.T.
Design and Tech.
'Through school he'
Playground 2
(Third and Second Year boys' territory for 'Cricket', 'Stingball' and Football')
Main Teaching Block
'Out of bounds' (First Year Chasing Games) (Mixed)
O.S.
C.W.
'Out of bounds'
M.R.
M.R.
Key
B.T. Boys' Toilets
G.T. Girls' Toilets
B. Benches
C.W. Covered Way and Covered Area with entrances to Main Teaching Block.
* Entrances to Teaching Block.
Route to Upper School
Routes for 'Through the school he'.
M.R. Main Road.
S.K. School Keeper's Garden.
O.S. Oil Storage Tank.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEWS

Seventy one pupils took part in this exercise. An advertisement was placed in the school newsletter inviting pupils to take part in the research and this led to a good response from Lower School pupils. The interview stage was the first phase of the research and it coincided with a term when I was on unpaid paternity leave from my Head of Department post in the school. Whilst on paternity leave, I returned to school one day each week to do supply work (largely to maintain contact with examination classes) and during the lunch hour on these days pupils were interviewed.

Many pupils responded to the advertisement and it became necessary to interview some pupils at other convenient times. In total sixty Lower School pupils were interviewed. All the Upper School pupils who were interviewed were students in G.C.S.E. Social Studies examination classes or in the 'A' Level Sociology set. These students were interviewed after expressing an interest in the research.

I felt that it was important at the interview stage to place an emphasis upon the use of volunteers. This approach assisted in the process of developing goodwill towards the whole research exercise in the school. The breakdown of pupils taking part in the research by gender, age and ethnic group is shown in Chart A.

CHART A

Year	GIRLS			
	White	Black Caribbean or African	South Asian	Greek or Turkish
7	3	3	-	1
8	3	1	1	-
9	11	2	2	1
10	3	1	1	1
11	-	2	-	-
12	-	1	-	-
TOTALS	20	10	4	3
Year	BOYS			
	White	Black Caribbean or African	South Asian	Greek or Turkish
7	4	2	1	-
8	8	2	1	1
9	6	5	2	-
10	-	-	-	1
11	-	-	-	-
12	-	1	-	-
TOTALS	18	10	4	2

Every interview involved between two and five students with the sole exception of one individual interview with an isolated second year pupil. The interviews were planned to be unstructured and opportunity was given to enable pupils to develop particular points about which they felt especially strongly. The interviews were taped and subsequently transcribed. I had planned in advance the main themes to be covered in each interview. The themes were:

1. Choice of activity during playtime.
2. The issue of whether individual students were able to do what they would ideally like to do.
3. Verbal abuse This theme was usually approached by an observation such as, 'One thing I've noticed about City School is that there seems to be very little cussing here. What do you think?'
4. Fighting In the case of younger pupils this was approached through a consideration of whether there tended to be more fighting in senior school than in primary school.
5. Age and Gender Whenever possible I tried to relate my examination of these areas to concrete issues. For example, I focused upon the question of who physically occupied playground space.
6. Bullying Questions about bullying developed naturally from a consideration of cussing. I invariably focused upon the concept of bullying after consideration of verbal abuse.
7. 'Race' In Chapter 9 I stressed my care in addressing this theme. I approached this theme through an introductory statement to the effect that City School pupils recognised that race relations were very good in the school.
8. Lunch Hour Exploration of this area involved questions intended to trigger comments about lunch time supervisors, dinner queues and ways of improving facilities in the Lower School.

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